Constructing Learner Autonomy
Through Control Shift:

Sociocultural Implications of Teacher Cognition and Practice
in a Chinese Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

Recognised as an educationally desirable goal, the development of learner autonomy (LA) has been extensively implemented and researched in various settings. Many have advocated that the goal can be achieved in a conventional school environment through control shifts from school managers to teachers and from teachers to students. However, few empirical studies have closely examined the actual practices of managers and teachers in this regard, and their perceptions on their own practices as well as the nature of autonomy. This is the research gap that stimulated the current study to seek to explore ways in which learner autonomy might be developed through the shift of control between school administrators, teachers, and students.

The study was conducted in the context of EFL instruction in a Chinese private secondary school, where LA was being promoted through a school-based curricular innovation. The participants comprised the school principal, the executive director, and all nine English Department teachers, which constituted an institutional case study, as well as individual cases. The overriding research question was: How might the findings of the present study contribute to a refined academic understanding of the role of control shift in the development of learner autonomy? To address this issue, four subsidiary questions were formulated: How was learner autonomy interpreted in a Chinese secondary school? In what ways was learner autonomy developed through control shifts in the school? In what ways did the administrators' and the teachers' beliefs converge with or diverge from their practices? How should the convergences and divergences be explained in the wider sociocultural context?

Taking an interpretive naturalistic paradigm, the study deployed a multi-method approach to data collection, conducted over an academic semester of five months. Data gathered included twenty-two classroom observations, sixteen post-lesson discussion sessions, eleven interviews, and numerous field and reflective notes, school documents and classroom materials. The collected data were subjected to a process of grounded analysis, through which important themes were identified by open and axial coding, constant comparison and contrast, and iterative checking.

The findings revealed a great diversity in both the teachers' practice and their cognition with respect to fostering LA through the transfer of control to students. Both practice and cognition could be viewed as points along parallel continua. One end of the practice continuum showed signs of comprehensive control release to students genuinely supporting LA, while the other displayed evidence of false control relinquishment, merely "paying lip service" to LA development. Similarly, in the cognitive dimension, one extreme suggested a teacher's deep understanding of the nature of LA and explicit awareness of her LA-oriented practice, whereas the other exposed another teacher's ill-defined interpretation of LA and unawareness of how her actions constrained learner autonomy. With numerous episodes at different points of the continua and changing over time, the teachers' practice and cognition exhibited a complex and dynamic range of convergences and divergences. Such complex and dynamic convergences and divergences were also reflected in the guidelines that the school managers provided for the teachers and the actual measures they took in relation to the promotion of LA in the school. Among the many factors that affected the implementation of LA development in the given context, three prominent ones were: the administrators' and the teachers' understanding of the meaning of LA; their beliefs and trust in learners' ability to take control; and their awareness of the LA-facilitating or hindering nature of the actions that they took in this regard.

The study concludes that Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Cole & Engeström, 1993) is conducive to illuminating the complexity and dynamics of the LA-oriented practice and cognition in the school. Although the findings of such a case study cannot be generalised to other contexts, the study makes an original contribution to comprehending the promotion of LA in Chinese secondary schools. In addition, it offers practical implications for researchers, policy makers, school administrators and teachers who are interested in and committed to adopting LA as a worthwhile educational goal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

故圣人云：

我无为而民自化, 我好静而民自正;

我无事而民自富, 我无欲而民自朴。

——老子（公元前六世纪）

Therefore the sage says：

I do nothing, and the people, by themselves, evolve;

I say nothing, and the people, by themselves, go right;

I let go control, and the people, by themselves, prosper;

I let go desire, and the people, by themselves, remain simple and pure.

(Lao Tzu, 6th Century BC) (Translated by the researcher)

1.1 Motivation for this study

Lao Tzu is my favourite philosopher, and I take the above quotation about self-regulation as a constant reminder in my teaching career that I must trust students and let them take control of their own learning and exercise their learner autonomy (LA). I believe this is the right way for teaching and learning, as no teacher can teach students all the knowledge and skills that they need throughout life. Indeed, the ability to take charge of one's own learning is essential for everyone. Thus the key job for the teacher is how to help students gain or strengthen such ability. This has been a question always in my thoughts as a teacher, and where my motivation for this study originated.

My motivation strengthened after some further reading about LA development in China's Basic Education Curriculum Reform (China MoE, 2001a), in which LA was defined explicitly as a key curricular goal. The Reform document claimed to make changes in classroom instruction, moving from students' passively receiving information transmitted by the teacher to their active learning and development through autonomous and collaborative inquiry. The Reform further called on teachers to provide opportunities and create conditions for students to do so (China MoE, 2001a). In response, various innovation programmes have been

carried out at schools throughout the country. In 2011, ten years after the Reform had first been implemented, there arose some intensive discussions regarding the outcomes and effectiveness of the innovations. Comments and opinions from the discussions were generally not very positive, and many voices expressed teachers' confusion, annoyance or frustration (Xu & Wong, 2011). As a teacher within the same educational system, I understood and to some extent shared those feelings. Then I wanted to know why.

In the field of language education, LA has been a focus of interest since the pioneering work of Holec and his colleagues in the 1980s. While the concept has been widely researched over decades from various aspects concerning the *what (definitions), why (rationale for its promotion),* and *how (approaches to its development)*, language teachers' beliefs about LA have not received the same degree of attention (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b). Research into teacher cognition has strongly claimed that teachers' beliefs play a significant role in informing and shaping their classroom practices (Borg, 2006; Phipps & Borg, 2007), and that the effect of any new curriculum initiative depends largely on teachers' understanding of the key notions involved in the innovations (Wedell, 2009).

Regarding the implementation of LA, the new Chinese curriculum highlights the importance of school-based development and invites schools and their teachers to share "distributed leadership" in curriculum planning and implementation (Xu & Wong, 2011, p. 47). Such sharing should occur at all levels in the educational hierarchy, and focusing on the classroom, Benson (2011) claims that LA could be constructed "by a shift in relationships of power and control" (p. 15). However, few empirical studies have examined closely how such a control shift is operationalised in schools to lead towards LA enhancement; and fewer have gone further to explore school managers' and teachers' perceptions on their own practices in this respect. Within the context of Chinese secondary schools, I have found no empirical studies to date that have investigated both school administrators' and teachers' beliefs and practices about LA with the focus on control transition.

In short, these factors drove the present study: my personal belief in the value of

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LA, the dissonance between the high status of LA in national curriculums and its unsatisfactory implementation in reality, and the research gaps identified regarding teachers' cognition and practice in developing LA through control shift, especially in the context of Chinese schools.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The present study helps to bridge the above-identified research gap. The overall aim is to investigate, from the perspective of teacher cognition and practice, the development of LA through control shifts between school managers, teachers, and students in a Chinese secondary school. Specifically, the study seeks to explore the understanding of the concept of LA within a Chinese secondary school, to look into practices of LA promotion through control shifts in the school, and to identify as well as explain the convergences and divergences between managers' and teachers' beliefs and practices in this respect. By doing so, the study expects to contribute to understanding the effect of control shift on LA in comparable contexts.

1.3 Significance of this study

This project presents a whole school case study of LA promotion, with a close examination of LA-related practices and beliefs of individual teachers and school administrators, and a comprehensive analysis of the wider historical social-cultural context where the school case was based. The significance of the study lies in the following dimensions.

First, this study presents an in-depth investigation into a whole school case of LA promotion with the particular focus of control shift in conventional EFL classrooms in a rare context. The rarity of the context manifests in three features: it was a newly-established private secondary school in China whose founder and principal had a Western educational background and acknowledged the value of LA; the school was running an LA-focused innovation project; and the participants in the research included all the English teachers in the school as well as the principal and the LA project leader. The LA-favourable feature of the school makes the study a valuable "test bed" (Robson, 2002, p. 182) for commonly-seen innovative educational programmes; and the comprehensiveness

of the participants (who are at different levels of the school hierarchy) creates a complex case comprising an institutional case, a programme case, and a number of individual teacher cases.

Second, this research explored teachers' beliefs about LA with evidence gained through a judicious combination of data collection procedures. Specifically, the data sources of the teachers' LA beliefs in this study were from interviews with the teachers which took place at the closing stage of the data collection as well as post-lesson discussions of researcher-observed lessons that the participating teachers taught. Such a way of exploring teachers' cognition differs from the one adopted in most of the existing studies which start with a survey (e.g., Barnard & Li, 2016b; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b). A major difference exposed was that without a survey – which itself informs the participants (Wang & Wang, 2016) – the participants showed little explicit knowledge about some key aspects of LA which have been explored theoretically and empirically (e.g., the view of learners' responsibility).

Third, the study seeks to contribute to the academic understanding of the relationship between teachers' cognition and practice regarding LA development in light of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Cole & Engeström, 1993). While previous studies about teacher beliefs and practices have adopted Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) to varying degrees and in various ways, they have not always explored the underlying sociocultural factors influencing such beliefs and practices. By using CHAT, it is intended that the historical development over time in teachers' beliefs and practices will be illuminated.

Fourth, this project provides practical implications for teachers and educational administrators of different levels in comparable contexts regarding both the practical operation of the control shift and cognitive understanding in this respect. The diverse and complex reality revealed in this study provides those educational institutions with a comprehensive reflector, against which they may check as well as reflect on their own practice and cognition in these aspects. In addition, the results of this study direct attention to the importance and urgency of assisting teachers to understand and articulate their pedagogical beliefs, which otherwise

may be tacit and implicit (Borg, 2006). By its nature a case study such as this does not seek to generalise its findings, but rather to provide thick data and a rich interpretation to enable readers in comparable contexts to judge the relevance of the findings to their own settings.

Lastly, the study is significant for myself in terms of my personal interest in and pursuit of the genuine development of autonomy in both students and teachers. Not only has it given me insight into the complexity of the control shift in an educational hierarchy, it also systematises my theoretical understanding of teachers' cognitive world in relation to their practices. More importantly, it enhances my interest and confidence in further practice and research into the development of autonomy with students, teachers, and educational institutions.

1.4 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised in six chapters. Following the present introductory chapter, Chapter Two reviews the literature in relation to the two key concepts in this study: learner autonomy and teacher cognition. The chapter consists of five sections. Section 2.1 deals with learner autonomy; Section 2.2 addresses teacher cognition and practice; and Section 2.3 presents and discusses the empirical studies on teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to the cultivation of learner autonomy. Section 2.4 then talks about Cultural Historical Activity Theory and its relevance to understanding the complexity of teacher cognition and practice. Section 2.5 summarises the chapter and defines the research questions.

Chapter Three deals with various aspects in relation to the methodology adopted in this study. It starts with the justification of the approach taken in this study and a description of the research setting and participants, and then addresses ethical issues. After that, it presents in detail the methods and procedures of data collection and analysis which were adopted. Lastly, it addresses the issue of research validity.

Chapter Four reports and comments on the major findings of the study. The chapter is organised in four sections. Section 4.1 presents the school managers' interpretations of learner autonomy and the autonomy-oriented school innovation project. Section 4.2 reports in detail the nine teachers' classroom practices.

Section 4.3 illustrates the teachers' general beliefs about learner autonomy as well as their rationales for their own classroom practices. Section 4.4 provides a summary of the chapter.

Chapter Five discusses the findings relating to both school administrators and teachers. The discussion starts with their knowledge of the concept and beliefs in learners' autonomous ability; and then moves on to their practices of control shift and support provision, as well as their reflections on these practices. After that, it deals with the relationships between the beliefs and practices. Lastly, the chapter explains the complexity of these relationships through the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory.

Chapter Six, which concludes the thesis, is organised in four sections. Section 6.1 summarises the main points of the project, including the purpose of the study, setting and participants, data collection and analysis, and key findings and discussions. Section 6.2 acknowledges the limitations of the study. Section 6.3 draws implications for classroom implementation, research, and theory. Section 6.4 suggests directions for further research. Section 6.5 presents my final reflections on the whole study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter One has stated the aims of this study and rationales for developing learner autonomy from the perspective of teacher cognition. This chapter will review the selected theoretical and empirical literature in relation to these two key concepts, presenting common understandings of these themes as well as critically examining research into these areas. By doing so, the chapter will be able to identify the research spaces for the present study in terms of the focus, context, and methodology. Based on the review, the research questions will be specified at the end of the chapter. This chapter is organised in five sections. Section 2.1 focuses on learner autonomy, 2.2 on teacher cognition and practice, and 2.3 examines the empirical studies in relation to teacher cognition and practice about developing learner autonomy. Section 2.4 deals with the conceptual framework for this study, and Section 2.5 summarises the chapter and defines the research questions.

2.1 Learner autonomy

Since the term being coined by Holec (1981), learner autonomy (LA) has been a popular research topic in the language education field. Its popularity is manifested in a large body of LA literature concerning various aspects of LA, which can be generally classified into three categories: *what (understanding of the concept), why (justifications for its promotion),* and *how (approaches to its development)*; and when further taking into consideration the cultural diversity of these aspects, the topic of LA has become more interesting and attracted more attention for both practice and research. In China, while the concept has long been recognised as a key national curricular goal, it has also been taken, to some extent, as an alien idea imported from the West (Xu, 2007). The review in this section, then, will address these prominent issues about LA, from five aspects: understanding the concept (in the West and in Chinese context); rationales for promoting LA; control shift as an approach to LA construction; shared control for collaborative learning; and teacher autonomy required for learner autonomy.

Next, I will move on to discuss these aspects one by one in detail.

2.1.1 Understanding the concept of learner autonomy

The notion of LA has been under wide discussion over a long time: from language learning to general education, from the West to the East, and from its contemporary use to origins in traditional philosophies. In this section, I will start with its origins and definitions in the West, then move on to its interpretations in the Chinese context, and conclude with a critical global view.

2.1.1.1 Learner autonomy in Western (English) literature

Origins and definitions

Although for over 30 years LA has been a concept well known in the field of language teaching and learning, it has a far earlier origin in general educational philosophies. Widely-cited Western theories that recognise the value of autonomy include: Rousseau's natural education (Boyd, 1956), Dewey's (1916, 1966) beliefs in pragmatism and problem solving, Kilpatrick's (1921) project method, and Rogers' (1969) self-actualisation theory (see Benson, 2011 for a comprehensive review). These theories have identified various aspects crucial for effective learning, among which the following are generally agreed:

- human beings are born with the desire for learning;
- it is learners who carry out the learning, therefore they should take responsibility;
- learning is acquired most effectively through experience, participation and exploration;
- learners learn both individually on their own and collaboratively with others;
- teachers' roles are to provide opportunities for support as well as to facilitate learners' individual and collaborative inquiry, with tolerance and patience for their errors in the process.

With respect to LA in language education, Holec (1981) has been regarded as the father of the concept, and his definition has remained prominent. According to Holec, LA is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3), which means learners having and holding "the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning", consisting of determining the objectives,

defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the learning process, and evaluating the learning outcomes. After Holec, the notion has been defined and interpreted by a number of scholars in various ways. Some frequently-cited early definitions are as follows:

- "the situation in which the learner is entirely responsible for all the decisions concerned with his [sic] learning and the implementation of those decisions" (Dickinson, 1987, p. 11);
- "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4);
- "the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices" (Crabbe, 1993, p. 443);
- "learners' ability and willingness to make choices independently" (Littlewood, 1996, p. 427);
- "choice and responsibility" are two key features of autonomy: "[t]he autonomous learner must be able to make significant decisions … is responsible for learning … so long as adequate opportunities are available" (van Lier, 1996, pp. 12-13, italics in original).

In light of the diverse views of LA, Benson (2001) acknowledged its multidimensional nature and proposed his definition of LA as "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (p. 47), claiming "control" to be a more observable construct than "charge" or "responsibility" for empirical investigation. He also specified three dimensions of learner control – over learning management, cognitive process, and learning content – which accorded with the three versions of LA that he suggested earlier: respectively, technical, psychological, and political (Benson, 1997). These views have been maintained and elaborated in Benson (2011). In addition, Huang and Benson (2013) further clarified the two key concepts in the definition: "capacity" and "control". Specifically, a "capacity" is "what a person has the potential to do, rather than what they actually do", which entails three components: "*ability*, *desire* and *freedom*" (p. 9, italics in original); and "control" means "having the power to make choices and decisions and acting on them" (p. 9), which involves three main dimensions, as identified in Benson (2001). Benson's (1997) three-version view of LA provides a general framework of the concept, against which other definitions seem to be more of one perspective than another; for example, Holec's and Dickinson's perspectives are more technically oriented, while those of Little and Littlewood appear more psychological, and Crabbe's and van Lier's contain more political implications.

Moreover, the three components of capacity that Huang and Benson (2013) identified can be seen as a combination of Crabbe's emphasis on freedom, van Lier's on opportunities, and Littlewood's on ability and willingness.

Regarding Benson's framework, however, Oxford (2003) pointed out that an important element of autonomy was missing – the social aspect – as a number of researchers have argued that autonomy implies interdependence, collaborative decision making, and collective control (Benson, 1996; Kohonen, 1992; Little, 1996). For example, the so-called "Bergen definition" (Dam, Eriksson, Little, Miliander, & Trebbi, 1990) described autonomy as "a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person" (p. 102); Allwright (1990) viewed autonomy as "a constantly changing but at any time optimal state of equilibrium between maximal self-development and human interdependence" (p. 12); Kohonen (1992) interpreted "the notion of interdependence" as "being responsible for one's own conduct in the social context: being able to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways" (p. 19); and Little (1996) stressed "the development and internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions" (p. 211).

Consequently, Oxford (2003) presented a four-perspective model of autonomy comprising technical, psychological, sociocultural, and political-critical dimensions, respectively focussing on the physical situation, characteristics of learners, mediated learning, and ideologies, access and power structures (pp. 76-80). The sociocultural perspective was further sub-categorised as Sociocultural I and II, both relying on mediated learning, but the former based on Vygotskyan approaches (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001) highlighting the individual's exercising autonomy while the latter being based on community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and emphasising the context of autonomy (Oxford, 2003, pp. 86-87). The social view of autonomy has been well supported since being identified (e.g., Little, 1996, 1999, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Toohey, 2007; Toohey & Norton, 2003, 2005; Ushioda, 2006). In addition, Toohey and Norton (2005) provided another definition of LA as "socially-situated agency" (p. 59), by which they meant learners were not agentive or autonomous on their own, but both constrained and enabled by the social setting in which they participated. Meanwhile, seeing the individual perspective of autonomy "drifting

in and out of view", Benson (2013) offered a combined argument that autonomy is "legitimately concerned with the development of individuals, but this concern needs to be underpinned by a well-grounded view of autonomous individual as a social being" (p. 75).

Relevant constructs in other terms

Toohey and Norton's definition brings into view the construct of agency, which has been widely recognised as related to and interwoven with autonomy (Huang, 2009; van Lier, 2008). In comparison to autonomy, agency places action at the central place. As van Lier (2008) stressed, it is "something that learners *do*, rather than something that learners *possess*", "*ability* as *action potential*" rather than "*competence* as an individual possession", or "behavior rather than property" (p. 171, italics in original). In addition, agentive action is purposeful and meaningful. As Huang (2009, p. 33) defined, agency refers to "action that arises from deliberation and choice" (see also Allison & Huang, 2005); and the action, as well as its consequence, is personally relevant and significant (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) and subject to evaluation (Duranti, 2004). Moreover, agentive action is socially situated and mediated – "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act", as defined by Ahearn (2001, p. 112). Such a social view of agency, like that of autonomy, has been widely echoed; for example, Wertsch, Tulviste, and Hagstrom (1993) stated that it is "not simply an individual character trait or activity, but a contextually enacted way of being in the world" (p. 337); van Lier (2002) perceived agency as action in response to affordances and constraints in a certain context; and citing Stetsenko and Arievitch (2004), Feryok (2012) offered the view of "individual agency on a continuum with society", which highlighted the "co-evolving" and "mutually influential" nature of individual activities and social reality (p. 97).

In addition to agency, a series of other terms are also used to interpret LA. Frequently-seen ones include *initiative*, *volition*, *intentionality*, *motivation, self-regulation and self-determination* (Deci & Ryan, 1985), as summarised by van Lier (2008, p. 171). For example, Feryok (2013) portrayed LA as "showing initiative in taking charge or control, making choices, and bearing responsibilities" (p. 214); and initiative, according to Stevick (1980), referred to

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"choices about who says what, to whom and when" (p. 19). As seen, these terms seem to be running in a circular way, one used to define another. Regarding these terms, van Lier (2008) presented his view of "family name" (agency) and "family members" (the italicised ones) and treated them all as synonyms of autonomy, saying that they "in practice refer to very similar phenomena" (p. 171). On this issue, I take a similar position to van Lier's, with autonomy as the umbrella term and others as "family members"; and I will also match some of these terms with various LA-related Chinese expressions which I will present and discuss in the following section (2.1.1.2).

Cultural appropriateness

Among the wide-ranging discussion on LA, its cultural appropriateness has appeared controversial and encountered different voices. Some claim that LA is a Western idea and does not thrive in other contexts. For example, Little (2007a) pointed out that since being first introduced to the language education field, the concept of LA has been "associated with Western democratic traditions", which "have sometimes provoked the argument that LA is inappropriate to non-Western educational systems" (p. 11). Early other examples of such can be seen from Riley (1988) with respect to non-European students' adoption of LA in European institutions, Ho and Crookall's (1995) concern about Chinese cultural traits liable to be "an obstacle" to LA (p. 235), and Jones's (1995) expression of "retreat from autonomy" in Cambodian culture due to its authoritarian tendencies (p. 229).

By contrast, another collective voice says that LA as an educational goal is universally appropriate (Aoki & Smith, 1999; Benson, 2001; Sinclair, 2000; Smith, 2003b). According to Benson (2001), there has been no evidence showing any particular culture is more advantageous or disadvantageous for the development of autonomy than other cultures. Smith (2003b) supported this view, saying that all learners, from East, West, North, or South, have "their own voices" and "the ability to reflect on and express their own views about what and how they are learning" (p. 259).

More interestingly, some other researchers resonate with neither of the above opinions but point to the complexity of this issue caused by gaps between claimed

goals and contextual hindrances in reality (Fonseka, 2003; Smith, 2003a; Vieira, 2003). According to Smith (2003b), the promotion of LA is either "by no means a generally established goal", or "paradoxically, when it does become established in name (or under names such as 'learner independence'), certain professional and institutional conceptions and practices connected with it can be seen to actually hinder its development" (p. 258). Based on this, Smith pointed out the potential constraints from certain "professional and organizational cultures" – or "sub-cultures" (Palfreyman, 2003) or "small cultures" (Holliday, 2003) – on the "appropriateness and feasibility" of promoting LA in a certain context. Further attention was called to the need for the teachers' professional autonomy of their own (Smith, 2003b) and critical self-awareness of "the possibilities and limitations within particular contexts" (Schmenk, 2005, p. 115)

Facing with varied views, Benson (2011) provided an explanation in terms of the distinction between "the principle of autonomy" in language learning and the related "pedagogical practices" (p. 70). Then it can be said that while the principle of LA may be universally relevant to all cultures (Littlewood, 1999), its contextual implementation is somewhat conditional. Conditions of this kind include professional and institutional conceptions and type of approach adopted (Holliday, 2003; Smith, 2003a); an educational system seeking to promote critical thinking and reflective learning (Nicoll, 2007; Shao & Wu, 2007); and teachers' views on students' knowledge and needs, and "degree of 'fit' of the teacher's conceptions with those of students" (Smith, 2003b, p. 256).

Some overviews

Along with the continual interpretations and discussions of the concept of LA, there have been scholars attempting to summarise generally-agreed or broadly-accepted views. Little (1990, p. 7) presented an LA-is-NOT list:

- **not** a synonym for self-instruction;
- **not** limited to learning without a teacher;
- **not** entailing an abdication of teachers' responsibility in the classroom context;
- **not** a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can;
- **not** something that teachers do to learners;
- **not** another teaching method;

- **not** a single easily described behaviour;
- **not** a steady state achieved by learners (emphasis in original).

Sinclair (2000, pp. 7-12) specified a different list of aspects, those that "have been recognised and broadly accepted by language teacher profession":

- autonomy is a construct of capacity;
- it is a willingness to take responsibility;
- it is not necessarily innate;
- complete autonomy is an idealistic goal;
- there are degrees of autonomy;
- the degrees are unstable and variable;
- it is not simply a matter of placing the learners in a situation where they have to be independent;
- it is conscious awareness of the learning process – conscious reflection and decision making;
- it is not a matter of teaching strategies;
- it is taking place both inside and outside the classroom;
- it has a social as well as an individual dimensions;
- it has a political as well as a psychological dimension;
- it is interpreted differently in different cultures.

Huang (2009, p. 8) listed the following as what "key researchers in the field tend to agree" about:

- Autonomy should be viewed from multiple perspectives (Benson, 1997; Oxford, 2003), and is a multidimensional capacity (Benson, 2001; Little, 1991).
- Autonomy is a learners' and teachers' right (Benson, 2000).
- There are degrees of autonomy (Nunan, 1996; Sinclair, 2000).
- The development of autonomy implies collaboration and interdependence, rather than learners working in isolation (Little, 1996, 2000; Littlewood, 1999, 2002).
- The concept of autonomy can accommodate different interpretations and is universally appropriate (Benson, 2001; Littlewood, 1999; Sinclair, 2000).

These summaries provide some reasonable overviews of the notion of LA. Notably, however, the "people" who showed agreement on these points were different. Specifically, they were "key researchers" in Huang's case, while from the "language teacher profession" in Sinclair's, and Little's clarification was mainly his own. Questions arise as to whether these generally-agreed points are

also shared by classroom teachers and school managers, and if so, to what extent, and in what context.

To conclude this section, the above review has outlined the origins of the concept of LA and its various definitions and dimensions in the field of language education. The review does show that autonomy is "not a single easily described behaviour" (Little, 1990, p. 7), and that it is necessary and important to allow for "diverse local perspectives on autonomy" (Smith & Ushioda, 2009). Furthermore, the discussion of autonomy and culture seems to have gone from general national and ethnic stereotyping of cultures to more specific contextual cultures (e.g., professional, organisational or institutional). Importantly, such issues have gained attention as to how the concept of LA is interpreted in a certain macro or micro culture by the teachers and students in it.

Next, I will move on to review the notion of LA in Chinese context.

2.1.1.2 Learner autonomy in the Chinese context

In China, LA was not an area much focused on for educational practice or research until 2000s, when it was mandated as a key curriculum goal in various educational reforms across the country. Often taken as an advanced idea borrowed from the West at the early stage of the innovation, gradually LA was viewed more critically in terms of its meanings and origins, as well as local conditions impacting on its development. This section will discuss LA in the Chinese context, starting with its role in national curriculums, moving on to the idea in language education research, and ending with discussions regarding cultural and contextual issues.

In national curriculum reforms

The recognition of LA as a key curricular goal has been reflected comprehensively in Chinese general education and language education of all levels (China MoE, 2001a, 2001b, 2004, 2007). Specifically, the Basic Education Curriculum Reform (China MoE, 2001a) claims to cultivate holistically-developed talents with active inquiry ability as a crucial quality (Wang, 2011a). The development of such ability is prescribed in two of the "six specific

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objectives", concerning the content of learning to be changed from knowledge to the way of acquiring knowledge and the way of learning from passive reception to active exploration (Feng, 2006).

As a result, new curriculum standards of all school subjects have been developed and put into practice, in which autonomous learning is defined as a fundamental ability for students' lifelong learning and development. The following excerpt presents the aim of the new English Curriculum Standards for secondary school students (years 6 – 9):

> To stimulate and develop students' English learning interest, to help students build up confidence, form good learning habits and effective learning strategies, to develop autonomous *(zi zhu)* learning ability and collaborative awareness; […] so as to lay a good foundation for their lifelong learning and development. (China MoE, 2001b) (translated by the researcher)

Similar emphasis on LA has also been stipulated in guidelines for China's tertiary language education. The new College English Curriculum Requirements (China MoE, 2004) prescribes:

> ... colleges and universities should remould the existing unitary teacher-centred pattern of language teaching by introducing computer- and classroom-based teaching models, […] so that English language teaching and learning will be, to a certain extent, free from the constraints of time or place and geared towards students' individualised and autonomous learning. (China MoE, 2004) (Translated by the researcher)

As illustrated, the Requirements call for a change in tertiary language learning from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches and an increase of computer use, implying to some extent that autonomous learning is individualised learning which relies largely on computer technology. In addition, the Requirements point out the importance of teacher beliefs in implementing the new curriculum, saying that in order to make the change happen in real practice, teachers must change their teaching philosophy (China MoE, 2004).

These national guidelines depicted the wider educational context of the time, in which LA research has been instigated and expanded in China.

In language education research

To the best of my knowledge, LA was first introduced into leading Chinese language education literature by Liu and Liu (1990), and has been since then widely referred to as *zi zhu xue xi* (literally, autonomous learning) or *xue xi zhe zi zhu* (literally, learner autonomy) – *zi* means *self*, notably. Xu (2007) claimed that the notion "originated in the West" (p. 26); and heavy Western influence was clearly evident in the most-frequently-cited Chinese LA literature, for example, Holec's (1981) learner autonomy in Peng (2002), Dickinson's (1987) self-directed learning in Li (1998), Zimmerman and Schunk's (1989) self-regulated learning in Pang (1999, 2000, 2001), Gardner and Miller's (1999) self-access learning in Hua (2003), and Benson and Voller's (1997) autonomy and independence in He (2003).

Along with the various Western terminologies in which the notion of LA was imported, a few Chinese scholars presented their own definitions and interpretations. In response to the diverse terminologies used in the English LA literature discussed in last section (2.1.1.1), I will provide the Chinese equivalents to the commonly used Chinese terms and explanations as well when necessary. According to Yu (2001), autonomous learning (*zi zhu xue xi*) is generally referred to as self-study (*zi xue*), emphasising particularly students, rather than teachers, as being the directors or decision makers (*zhu zai*) of their own learning. Yu further related autonomous learning to learners being subjects (*zhu ti*) rather than objects (*ke ti*), for which four elements are essential:

- Agency (*neng dong xing*): learners have the awareness and take control of their own development;
- Independence (*du li xing*): learners have their own will, wants, and ability to learn independently, free from teachers' will or control;
- Individuality (*ge ti xing*): learning should be based on, and cater for, individual differences (e.g., learning pace, selection of materials; guidance and assistance needed; and potential for learning beyond prescribed syllabus);
- Wholeness (*zheng ti xing*): learners should be treated as whole-persons with integrated intellectual and personal traits.

Pang (2001) proposed horizontal and vertical dimensions of LA, the former focusing on learners consciously making decisions on all aspects of their own

learning while the latter on the dynamic and continual nature of such decision making throughout the learning process (p. 37). Pang also emphasised four essential elements in LA: learners exercising their agency for learning (*neng xue*), wanting to learn (*xiang xue*), knowing how to learn (*hui xue*), and learning persistently (*jian chi xue*) (pp. 80-81). Xu (2007) (author of the first LA book in China) offered a narrow view of LA as "learning to learn" (*xue hui xue xi*) and a broad view as "learning to liberate" (*xue hui jie fang*) (pp. 8-14). Cui (2013) presented a strong individual perspective of LA in three *self-* expressions: self-reliant (*zi li*), self-acting/doing or acting on initiative (*zi wei*), and self-disciplined (*zi lv*); and she further elaborated the definition with more *self-* phrases, including self-thinking, self-decision-making, self-choosing materials, self-information-processing, self-problem-solving, self-awareness, self-construction, self-exploration, and self-creation (pp. 16-18).

Through the above-presented terminologies and definitions, three points of LA were commonly highlighted. First, learners are the agents of their learning, and learn actively on their volition (Cui, 2013; Pang, 2001; Yu, 2001). Second, learners are conscious of responsibility and decision-making for their own learning as well as self-management ability (Cui, 2013; Hua, 2002; Pang, 2001, 2003; Peng, 2002; Wang; Yu, 2002). Third, learners carry out their learning in such autonomous ways as setting up goals, making plans, choosing materials and strategies, monitoring learning process and evaluating learning progress (Cui, 2013; Fan, 2004; Hua, 2002; Pang, 2001, 2003; Peng, 2002; Wang, 2002; Xu, 2007; Yu, 2002).

These points acknowledge learners' role in learning as well as their mental and behavioural control over the learning process. In reference to the four dimensions of LA proposed by Oxford (2003), they seem concerned more about the psychological and technical facets, while the social and political elements are not as much in focus as in the Western LA literature (Huang, 2007). Evidently, the individual view of autonomy is rather strong, especially in Cui (2013), the reason for which could be linguistic – the Chinese equivalent of *"zi"* in *"zi zhu"* (autonomy or autonomous) means self, as noted earlier. Another point worth noting is that the word "responsibility" carries a different additional meaning in China, which is taken as a motivation for learning in parallel with interest. It

means that ideally learners learn more autonomously when having interest in what they learn; but may still do so if they have the sense of responsibility, for their own future, their family, their country, or the society (Yu, 2001). In some sense, responsibility means self-discipline, that is, one does what needs to be done even when he/she does not feel like doing so. As to learner control, although it is recognised to some extent, there seems to be no guarantee whether opportunities for such control are allowed or not – that is, whether teachers are willing to release control to students, or whether they themselves have the freedom or power to do so – often not in the Chinese context, according to Wu (2004). Power or freedom as such relates to the notion of teacher autonomy and will be further discussed later in Section 2.1.5. Also noticeably, autonomy as a learner's (or teacher's) right is not much stressed.

In Chinese educational philosophies

Some scholars explored the origins of autonomy and found it deeply rooted in Chinese educational philosophies. Pang and Xue (2001) pointed out that the concept of self-instruction or self-discovery/acquisition was much advocated and applied in Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, which embraced such crucial elements for learning as setting goals, thinking critically in learning, having an inquiring mind, having the awareness and ability to seek help from others, and being reflective. These principles were commonly shared by many distinguished Chinese educators throughout Chinese history, including Confucius (551-479 BC) and Mencius (372-289 BC), Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi in Song Dynasty (960-1279), and Wang Yangming and Wang Fuzhi in late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Chen (2005) added Confucius' emphasis on the love of learning (*hao xue*), pursuit for personal development (*xue dao*), trust in ordinary people's learning ability (*sheng ren ke xue,* literally "A sage is learnable" or "Everyone can be a sage through learning"), learners being the agents (*wei ji zhi xue*), and teachers stepping aside to support learners' self-actualisation (c*heng ren zhi dao*). Wu (2011) reaffirmed Confucius' stress on the timing for enlightening students, which says *"bu fen bu qi, bu fei bu fa"* (not to enlighten students until they have reached the point of inner frenzy for understanding and articulation) (p. 572), and reinforced the value of students initiating inquiry as a prerequisite for LA.

Some other scholars also found the essence of LA embedded in modern education theories, including language learning advocates proposed by recognised language educators. For example, Yu Ziyi (1896-1970) emphasised the willingness for learning (Dong & Dong, 2008), Chen Heqin (1892-1982) maintained the maxim of "learning in doing" (Chen & Ke, 2012), and Ye Shengtao (1894-1988) expressed his vision "to teach in order not to teach" (Zhu, 2014). Zhu Xi, Chen Heqin and Ye Shengtao all emphasised the teacher's roles as guide, supporter and facilitator in genuine education (Xu & Zhu, 2014). Regarding language learning, Liu advised students (Liu, 1997) of independent and critical thinking, Gu (2002) pointed out the determining role of learners rather than teachers, and Z.-R. He (2003) held that language is acquired by learners' learning rather than teachers' teaching.

The above historical review of Chinese traditional and modern educational theories reveals common emphases in the development of LA, involving the agents of learning (learners rather than teachers), attitudes towards learning (love, willingness), aim of learning (pursuit for personal development), way of learning (learning by doing), crucial attributes in the learning process (setting goals, being inquiry, independent and critical thinking, seeking help from others, and reflection), trust in learners' ability (everyone can be a sage through learning), teachers' roles in developing LA (serving for learners' self-actualisation), and timing of teacher intervening (not until learners have thought hard by themselves). Importantly, the view of control transition from teacher to student was well expressed in these aspects, for example, "to teach in order not to teach". Also, these emphases show much resemblance with highlights of LA in the Western literature, which suggest that LA should not be a novel idea to Chinese teachers or educational administrators, and indicates the necessity of reconsidering the issue of conceptual import and localisation (Shi & Zhou, 2007). The next section addresses this issue.

Critical views on conceptual import and localisation

Views of Chinese scholars on the adoption and promotion of LA in China diverge. Many criticising comments are heard, including arbitrary use of terminologies (Li, 2013), uncritical borrowing or copying Western concepts (Shu & Hua, 2009) or

failure to contextualise the notion (Shu, 2004; Zhong & He, 2009). For example, Gao (2005) viewed autonomous learning as entirely the same as self-directed learning, while Qi (2002) identified an enumeration of terms but failed to distinguish them as similar or different, and some interpretations of the concept were simply a combination of translation, rephrasing and summary of Western theories (e.g., Hua, 2002; Pang, 2000). Shi and Zhou (2007) expressed their concern about Chinese language education academia "following the West blindly" and "talking about nowhere but Greece" (*yan bi cheng xi la,* Chinese proverb) when introducing new concepts (p. 129). On such a basis, they called for attention to localising language education guidelines, with reference to both western theories and Chinese traditions. Huang (2007) particularly pointed out the need for research into autonomy in the context of the new English curriculum standards (China MoE, 2001b), especially in relation to teachers' understanding of the concept of autonomy, both learners' and teachers' (p. 77).

On the other hand, however, there is evidence of some critical thinking and attempts for conceptual localisation of learner autonomy. For example, Hua (2001) expressed her disagreement with the view of leaving all decision-making to students in the Chinese context; Xu and Zhan (2004) realised the complexity of the concept and expressed the necessity for a local definition of autonomy. Subsequently, action was seen in Xu (2007) in which she identified five key elements of autonomy for Chinese university non-English major students: knowing teachers' aims and requirements; defining their own goals and plans; using learning strategies; monitoring the use of strategies; and monitoring and assessing learning process. Notably in this perception, the first point concerns teachers' aims and requirements, rather than students', which makes the definition sound more teaching/curriculum-serving than student-need-accommodating.

To summarise this section about the situation of LA in China, the notion has attracted much attention in educational practice and research since it was identified as a valuable curriculum goal at the start of 2000s. While LA has been defined and interpreted from varied dimensions, there has been a tendency within Chinese language academia to view LA as an alien concept imported from the West. Regarding such a tendency, some scholars showed concern and searched the origins of LA in Chinese educational traditions, calling for a critical

contextualised view of LA implementation with necessary consideration for local socio-cultural conditions.

2.1.1.3 Bridging the West and the East

Along with the concern of some Western researchers about the appropriateness of LA for non-Western contexts and that of some Chinese scholars about uncritical conceptual import, there is evidence in literature showing connection between the West and the East in relation to the nature of autonomy. Liu's (2008) comparative study shows considerable influence of Laozi (also Lao Tzu, Lao-tse) on Carl Rogers, an important source of LA theory as identified by Benson (2001). Rogers (1980, p. 42) cited Laozi's well-known quotation,

> If I keep from meddling with people, they take care of themselves,
> If I keep from commanding people, they behave themselves,
> If I keep from preaching at people, they improve themselves,
> If I keep from imposing on people, they become themselves.
> (original in Chinese, translation in Friedman, 1972)

The excerpt presents Laozi's important proposition of self-governing, which well matches the Chinese meaning of autonomy "*zi zhi*" (self-governing) or "*zi zhi quan*" (the right/power of self-governing), as defined in The English-Chinese Dictionary (Lu, 1993). This proposition contributed to the foundation for Rogers' humanistic or person-based approach. According to Liu, both Rogers and Lao Tzu believed firmly that human beings are born with the capacity, as well as the will, for self-actualisation and autonomy, based on which the best way for personal development is trusting and respecting each individual with as little intervention as possible. The implication of this belief for the development of LA in classrooms is simple and clear: trust and respect students, let them take control and grow naturally, and they will prosper by themselves.

Similarly but in a reverse direction, the distinguished Chinese educator Tao Xing-Zhi, a student of Dewey, provided an example of one who was educated in and influenced by Western theories, and developed his own educational beliefs (Xi, 2006). Tao's emphasis is well reflected in his name *Xing-Zhi*, which means knowledge and action, or knowing and doing; and his main thoughts are "life is education", "society is school" and "combining teaching, learning and doing". As

for Dewey, the relevance of Tao's theory to the notion of autonomy is that it places students in the central position in the learning process, views real life as providing the best learning resources and values experiential learning.

Huang (2009, p. 8) also acknowledges the common thinking about individual inquiry between Zhu Xi and Galileo (see also Benson, 2001):

> If you are in doubt, think it out by yourself. Do not depend on others for explanations. Suppose there was no one you could ask, should you stop learning? Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200)
> You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

The above examples show clearly that the notion of LA is well-grounded in both Western and Chinese traditions, which should leave little doubt about the origin or feasibility of LA in both cultures – at least in the broad sense.

Now to conclude Section 2.1.1, the review suggests that LA has been an attractive research focus in both the West and Chinese context, wide-ranging discussions involving various aspects including the impact of cultural diversities. On such a basis, a global open view seems appropriate in accepting LA as a universally feasible idea, as well as a critical local consideration of various contextual factors. With the various definitions, interpretations, and discussions about LA widespread in educational literature, however, a crucial question to ask is: how much are these shared by classroom teachers, and educational administrators, especially in Chinese school contexts?

2.1.2 Rationales for promoting learner autonomy

The value of autonomy has been widely and strongly recognised in the language education area and beyond. Described as the 'buzz-word' of the 1990s (Little, 1991, p. 2), autonomy now enjoys status as "a legitimate and desirable goal of language education" (Benson, 2011, p. 2). Over decades, researchers have justified the development of LA from various aspects (e.g., Benson, 2012; Cotterall, 1995; Crabbe, 1993; Little, 2009; Littlewood, 1996; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003).

Crabbe (1993) presented three arguments: ideologically, it is a right of learners to be free to exercise their own choices in learning in order not to become victims of choices made by social institutions; psychologically, learners learn better when taking charge, becoming motivated and focused; and economically, the society does not have the pedagogical resources suited to or needed by everyone in every area of learning, hence learners must be able to provide for their own learning needs, either individually or cooperatively. Cotterall (1995, p. 219) offered another three perspectives in terms of philosophical, pedagogical, and practical reasons, involving respectively learners' right for decision-making and need to prepare for future changes, effectiveness of learning based on knowledge of the learning process, and learner involvement in a secure learning environment. Palfreyman (2003) provided a five-dimensional summary: 1) it improves the quality of language learning; 2) it promotes democratic societies; 3) it prepares learners for life-long learning; 4) it is a human right; and 5) it allows learners to make the best use of learning opportunities. Littlewood (1996) and Benson (2012) discussed three similar domains in terms of "autonomy as a communicator, as a learner, and as a person" (Littlewood, 1996, p. 432), and "autonomy in language learning, learning, and life" (Benson, 2012, p. 29). Little (2009) added that autonomous learning brings about transformation between classroom knowledge and practical knowledge, or between "school knowledge" and "action knowledge" in Douglas Barnes' (1976, p. 81) terms.

Looking through the above points, the benefits of LA can be placed on four levels, namely, for effective and efficient language learning and using, learning in general and its application, personal development/wellbeing, and the healthy development of society. In addition, Benson (1997, 2001, 2009, 2011) has presented varied socio-economic situations which require or provide conditions for the development of LA. Major elements identified in 1997 and 2001 were the expansion of language education, tendencies for individualised and learner-centred learning, development of technology, and commercialisation of public education; whereas in 2009 and 2011, some different conditions arose, including the changing landscape of language teaching and learning, the globalisation of educational policy, changing assumptions about the nature of work and competence, the rise of self-improvement culture, and the changing conceptions

of social and personal identity (Benson, 2011, pp. 19-23). Among these, the "self" or identity appeared a salient theme, also perceived in terms of "the self as a reflexive project" (Giddens, 1991) and "the technologisation of the self" (Benson, 2009, pp. 22-23). The central issue lies in the face of the multiple identities or representations of the self, including a socially-desirable one, which is the one genuinely desired, either the present being or the to-be being driven by the "self-improvement culture" (Cameron, 2002, p. 75).

The above-presented reasons and social economic conditions have provided sound evidence for the promotion of LA as a desirable general educational goal. However, some questions to ask are: Are these reasons and conditions known or applicable to classroom teachers, and school managers? Do they share these values of LA? And do they associate their own practice with the social economic conditions that they are in?

Next, I will move on to examine approaches to classroom implementation of LA.

2.1.3 Control shift: an approach to learner autonomy

Regarding the development of autonomy in classroom settings, according to Benson (2001), the key factor is "the opportunity for students to make decisions regarding their learning within a collaborative and supportive environment" (p. 151). Voller (1997) viewed the matter in terms of power and control shift, claiming autonomous learning demands "the teacher's power be lessened and the learner's power concomitantly increased" (p. 106). Candy (1991) placed such control shift on a continuum, or a series of continua, with teacher control at one extreme and student control at the other. In other words, the construction of autonomy is achieved through "the deliberate surrendering of certain prerogatives by the teacher accompanied by the concomitant acceptance of responsibility by the learner or learners" (p. 9).

In the above claims, Benson clarified the roles in the construction of LA: students to take control while teachers to provide support. Voller emphasised the control and power re-allocation: teachers' to be decreased while students' to be increased. Candy stressed the shifting nature of teacher/student control and the different actions of the two parties involved: teachers to give and students to take. An

important point shared by both Voller and Candy is the concomitant nature of the power re-allocation or control shift. While this sounds the ideal way, the reality may not be as simple.

Some authors express caution in the implementation of control release in classroom. Chene (1983) pointed out two limitations relating to residual control, saying even in highly teacher-controlled situations there is still some residue of learner-control, and likewise, even in the most liberal of learner-controlled situations, residual authority of the teacher may still exist (p. 44). Candy (1991) warned of the risk of "pseudo-autonomy" (p. 238), describing a phenomenon of teachers going through "the motions of devolving responsibility onto learners", but without "commitment or conviction" (p. 237). Benson (2001, 2011) also made reference to this, and presented from two dimensions: one is whether learners are offered "genuine freedom" or not, and the other whether learners' decisions have "real consequences" (2011, p. 165). He also called attention to the issue of flexibility, in both the guidelines for the teachers' implementation of a curriculum and in the curriculum itself, both of which affect spaces for genuine learner control.

Focusing on implementing learner control in classrooms, various pedagogical principles or guidelines have been found in LA literature. Nunan (1997) proposed a five-level scheme, comprising awareness, involvement, intervention, creation and transcendence. Specifically, learners are first made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials in use; then, they make their own choices; next, they modify and adapt the goals and content; after that, they create their own goals and objectives; lastly, they go beyond the classroom and link the content to the outside world. The gradual nature of learners' control-increase in Nunan's scheme is reflected in the way that they start from knowing available choices, to making and modifying the choices, and then to getting away from the choices to create their own goals and take out-of-class content. However, the scheme seems merely to focus on learning goals and content, without concerning other learning aspects such as monitoring the process or assessing the outcomes, which somewhat limits its use as a comprehensive operational guide.

Benson (2003) presented five different guidelines: be actively involved in students' learning; provide options and resources; offer choices and decision-making opportunities; support learners; and encourage reflection. Little (1999, 2001, 2007b) termed his three principles as learner involvement, learner reflection, and appropriate target language use. Overlap can be seen across Nunan, Benson and Little in their emphasis on learner involvement, while Benson and Little also stress learner reflection, and Little particularly highlights target language use in the development of LA. Overall, it seems Nunan's scheme and Little's principles relate more to a students' perspective, while Benson's guidelines relate more to teachers.

Jime´nez Raya, Lamb, and Vieira (2007) further suggested nine pedagogical principles: 1) encouraging responsibility, choice, and flexible control; 2) providing opportunities for learning to learn and self-regulation; 3) creating opportunities for cognitive autonomy support; 4) creating opportunities for integration and explicitness; 5) developing intrinsic motivation; 6) accepting and providing for learner differentiation; 7) encouraging action-orientedness; 8) fostering conversational interaction; and 9) promoting reflective inquiry (p. 59). With common core emphases on choices and reflection with the guidelines across Nunan, Benson, and Little, comparatively these nine suggestions go into more detail and concern more areas of classroom learning; for example, students' motivation, interaction and differentiation of individual learners. However, while more specific, these principles appear in a rather discursive manner, hardly showing a clear "line" as an operational guide. In this regard, Reinders' (2010) contribution seems easier to follow.

Reinders' framework consists of eight stages in developing LA in a classroom setting, each of which can go from the traditional teacher-directed to the learner-directed mode (see Figure 1)

Learning stages	Teacher-directed	Learner-directed
Identifying needs	Placement tests, teacher feedback.	Learner experiences difficulties in using the language.
Setting goals	Determined by the course, relatively fixed.	Contextually determined, relatively flexible.
Planning learning	Determined by the teacher. Somewhat flexible.	Contextually determined. Very flexible.
Selecting resources	Provided by teacher.	Self-selection by learners.
Selecting learning strategies	Teacher models and instructions.	Self-selection by learners.
Practice	Exercises and activities provided by teacher.	Implementation (language use) and experimentation.
Monitoring progress	Regular classroom feedback and comments on assignments and tasks.	Self-monitoring, peer feedback.
Assessment and revision	Tests, curriculum changes.	Self-assessment, reflection.

Figure 1: Stages in the development of learner autonomy
Source: Reinders (2010, p. 46). Reprinted with permission.

Compared to other guidelines presented earlier, Reinders' framework covers a greater range of the aspects of learning, and shows both teacher- and student-directed practices. It also illustrates Candy's (1991) view of continua of control shift, in that with each aspect practitioners in actuality may go more towards one direction or the other, depending on different conditions. In addition, it highlights the cyclical nature of the autonomous learning process, as well as the significance of reflection, motivation and interaction providing the cognitive, affective and social backbone, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Assessment
and revision   →   Identifying
                     learning needs

Monitoring
progress   Setting
                                      goals

            Motivation
            Interaction
            Reflection

Practice   Planning
                                      learning

            Selecting   Selecting
            strategies   resources
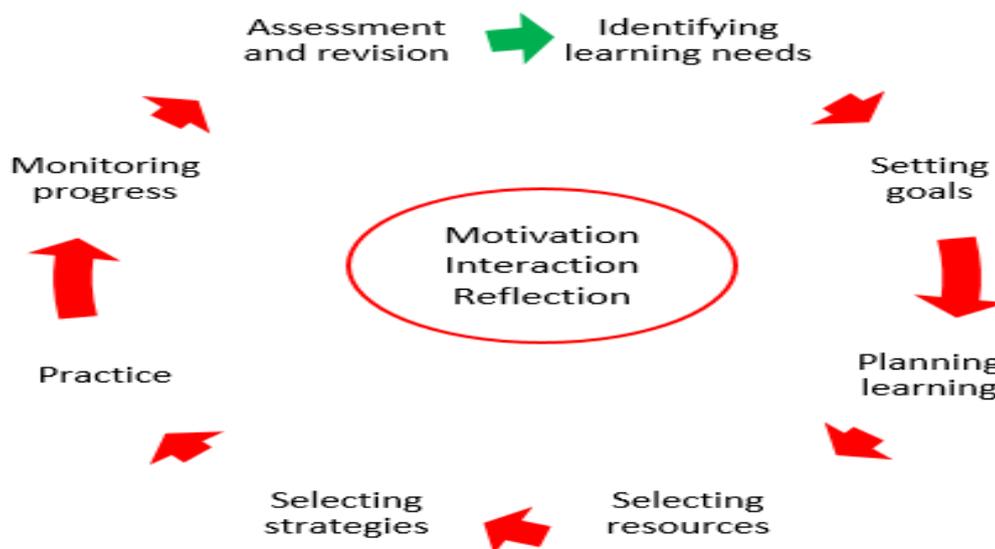
Figure 2: Cyclical nature of the autonomous learning process
Source: Reinders (2010, p. 51). Reprinted with permission.

In addition to guidelines or principles for classroom implementation of LA, also found in LA literature are lists of specific strategies or techniques in relation to encouraging leaners' taking control (see detail in Benson, 1997, 2003; Little, 2006; Nunan, 2003). Focusing on the theme of control transfer, the various techniques and strategies can be grouped into five categories: 1) allowing/creating free space (e.g., encouraging learner choice or divergent student outcomes); 2) preparing learners (e.g., raising awareness of learning processes, helping learners identify their own preferred styles and strategies); 3) using LA-enhancing materials (e.g., authentic materials and real language, learning about the target language and its social contexts, open-ended learning tasks, learners' out-of-class experience); 4) letting learners learn by doing (e.g., encouraging student preparation, involving students in task design, encouraging learners to become teachers or researchers) individually (e.g., self-production of tasks and materials, self-assessment, independent inquiry) or collaboratively (e.g., peer teaching, peer-assessment, peer teaching, student-student interaction, or collaborative group work and collective decision making); and 5) encouraging thinking in/after doing (e.g., criticism of learning tasks and materials, criticism of target language norms, and reflection). Tentatively, these categories – a synthesis of the strategies and techniques by Benson (1997, 2003), Little (2006), and Nunan (2003) – can be placed on a control-transfer flow chart as illustrated in Figure 3.
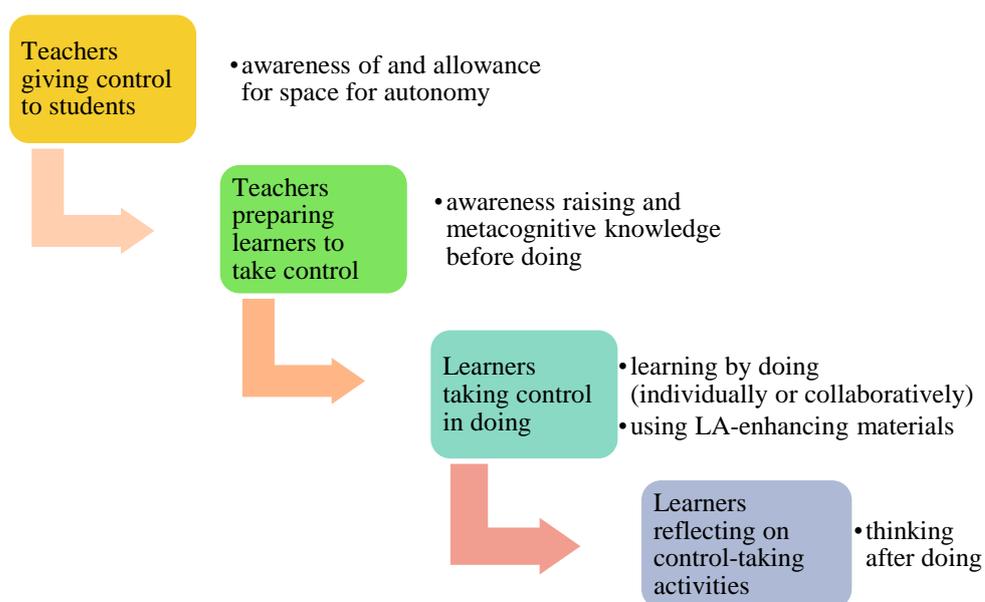
Figure 3: Techniques and strategies for control shifting in classrooms

As indicated, the logic in the chart is that teachers prepare themselves to shift control to students (in terms of both awareness and knowledge of actual strategies for action), then prepare students for the transition (both mentally and strategically), and then students take over control from teachers exercising their agency in doing and follow up with reflection on their control-taking actions. Alternatively, taking Farrell's (2007) view of reflection in, on, and for action, the awareness development and metacognitive preparation on students' part are in effect their reflection (thinking) for action. In this sense, it might be useful to transfer Farrell's promotion for reflective teaching for teachers to reflective learning for students and encourage students to think before, while, and after their actions, regarding particularly their control-taking in this case.

2.1.4 Collaborative learning: shared learner control

As the social aspect of LA is increasingly recognised, many researchers have explored collaborative learning for LA development, highlighting the interactive nature of learning and learners' interdependence (e.g., Allwright, 2000; Benson, 2013; Benson & Ying, 2013; Kohonen, 2010; Little, 1996, 2000; Littlewood, 1999, 2002; Murray, 2014). Approaches of this type in the language education field have been labelled variously, including collaborative learning (Alishaei & Shokouhi, 2009), peer learning (Stracke, 2012), peer teaching (Benson & Ying,

2013), pair or group work (Chen & Hird, 2006; McDonough, 2004; Storch, 2001), and cooperative group learning (Alghamdi & Gillies, 2013), to name a few. Oxford (1997) describes distinctions among cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction as three strands of communication in EFL classrooms. Given the focus of this thesis, collaborative learning in this section is used as a general term embracing all approaches through which students work with one another for knowledge construction or skill improvement in contrast to knowledge being imparted by the teacher.

Pedagogical reasons for using collaborative learning for the development of LA are several, benefits evident in a number of aspects. First of all, it creates a supportive learning environment which may be less anxiety inducing and threatening than whole-class discussions (Brown, 2001; Peterson, 2012). In such an environment, the focus of the classroom is shifted from the teacher to students, and responsibility is passed over in part to students; hence teacher dominance is reduced and student participation enhanced (Benson, 2011; Dam, 1995). Through such participation, students learn from and with each other in ways that are "mutually beneficial and involve sharing knowledge, ideas and experience between participants" (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001, p. 3). Also, the participation provides learners with more time to use the target language than teacher-fronted activities, or to prepare contributions for whole class work (Benson, 2011; Brown, 2001). Moreover, the participation and social interaction enhances capacity for reflection and analysis, which is central to the development of LA (Little, 1996). Overall, by "shifting the locus of control in instruction", collaborative learning has demonstrated much advantage in enriching the learning environment, accommodating individual differences, and enhancing students' own learning as well as peer co-construction (Benson & Ying, 2013, p. 52).

However, while the positive impact of collaborative learning on LA has been widely accepted, it is not an approach free from doubt or concern. Some major issues relate to its relationship with autonomy, language proficiency, and culture. Specifically, Lederer and Raban (2001) argued that autonomy should be the precondition for peer learning, saying peer learning can only happen if there is autonomy. Stracke (2012) claimed differently a simultaneous and reciprocal relationship between autonomy and collaboration, emphasising their mutually

beneficial attribute (p. 38). From another different angle, Alishaei and Shokouhi (2009) were concerned with the condition and effectiveness for collaborative learning and autonomy, saying that development of LA through collaborative learning is evident only in more proficient students; and Storch (2001) stated that students working in pairs may not necessarily work in a collaborative manner. As to the cultural appropriateness of collaborative learning, interestingly while some (Ellis, 1996; Holliday, 1994) see it as imported Western communicative pedagogy, some view group-based collaborative approaches as particularly salient (Littlewood, 1999), or even "more appropriate than completely individualised learning" (Smith, 2001, p. 70) for Asian contexts. For example, Miller and Aldred (2000) and Tang (1996) viewed group work as admirably suited to the Chinese way of learning, and Flowerdew (1998) supported this view and attributed the appropriateness to three key Confucian values: co-operation, the concept of "face", and self-effacement (p. 323).

It can be seen from the above discussion that while collaborative learning has been recognised widely as a useful approach towards the development of autonomy through shared control among learners, its appropriateness or effectiveness in the Chinese context, like that of LA, is not fully shared among language education practitioners and researchers, a topic which therefore needs further investigation.

2.1.5 Teacher autonomy required for learner autonomy

In the large body of LA literature, it has been widely accepted that developing autonomous learners requires teachers to be autonomous in their own practice, which generates the term teacher autonomy (Little, 1995). By analogy with learner autonomy, Aoki (2002) defined teacher autonomy as "the capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (p. 111). She then found the definition somewhat problematic in that it seemed to have lost the connection between the teachers' own autonomy and their support for their learners' autonomy, whereas some others highlighted the intrinsic value of teacher autonomy for teachers themselves and commented that the connection was not logically necessary (Shaw, 2008; Smith & Erdögan, 2008). Some other researchers viewed teacher autonomy as a professional attribute – an ability for

self-directed professional development (Aoki, 2002; McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2000; Thavenius, 1999), which Smith (2003c) termed differently as "teacher-learner autonomy" stressing the learning dimension (p. 161). In this sense, Huang (2005) contributed a comprehensive description as "teachers' willingness, capacity and freedom to take control of their own teaching and learning" (p. 206), in which he incorporated "teachers' capacity for self-directed professional action and professional development, as well as their freedom from control by others over professional action or development" (Huang, 2009, p. 20).

Professional freedom as mentioned above, and earlier (in Section 2.1.1), is an important aspect of teacher autonomy (Benson, 2000; Mackenzie, 2002); however, there is no complete such freedom in reality as most teachers work under conditions affected by such factors as educational policy or institutional rules and conventions – or institutional culture, in Huang's (2009) term. Regarding the development of LA, teachers' practice is often subject to various contextual conditions which may be autonomy-facilitating or constraining (Benson, 2000; Carroll & Head, 2003; McCasland & Poole, 2002; Trebbi, 2003; Vieira, 2003). Such a reality requires the teachers, if they wish to develop LA genuinely, to act as a "mediator" between the educational authorities and students, that is, to create space and provide support as much as possible for LA on the basis of existing situational constraints (Benson, 2000).

With regard to teachers' professional autonomy and situational constraints as described above, Lamb (2000) argues for teachers' self-empowerment for their personal well-being; Barfield et al. (2002) adds that "teachers can work collaboratively towards confronting constraints and transforming them into opportunities" for "personal and professional improvement" (p. 220); Vieira (2003) highlights both willingness and ability of teachers to mediate between "constraints and ideals" (p. 222); McGrath (2000) stresses the importance of teachers' attitudes towards constraints and calls for "self-directed professional activity" rather than waiting for professional freedom to be "granted" (p. 102); and Benson (2007) argues for re-conceptualising autonomy as a "usable" construct in existing classrooms without necessarily challenging the current conditions or constraints that it is subject to (p. 23).

In summary, Section 2.1 has reviewed the *what*, *why*, and *how* in relation to the concept of learner autonomy. Key points are outlined as follow: in the language education field, LA has been an interesting focus of research since the 1980s in the West and 2000s in China, during which the notion has been defined and interpreted in diverse ways; while four dimensions of LA (Oxford, 2003) have been widely discussed in the West, the social and political dimensions are not so much in focus in the Chinese literature; while opinions on the cultural appropriateness of LA have been varied, the value of LA has been recognised highly across the world; shifting control to students has been widely agreed as crucial for LA development, and collaborative learning has been advocated as conducive for LA enhancement in which learners share control with their teachers and peer learners; and teacher autonomy is widely agreed to be vital or pre-conditional for the development of LA. Throughout the wide discussion in the LA literature, a common thread has become increasingly noticeable – the impact of contextual factors on autonomy – which implies the necessity of using a socio-cultural approach for LA-related research; and some common questions point to perceptions of classroom teachers and school administrators on key issues about LA much-discussed among researchers, which appear under-researched and deserve more attention.

Next, I will move on to discuss teacher cognition.

2.2 Teacher cognition and practice

As stated in Chapter One, learner autonomy is the practical focus in this study, and teacher cognition is the selected perspective for the inquiry. Section 2.1 has reviewed the concept of LA comprehensively in relation to its *what, why,* and *how.* This section then will look at the construct of teacher cognition. Four dimensions are examined: its meaning, contents, and nature; sources of language teachers' cognitive development; its application in classroom practice; and domains that have been covered by empirical studies. Next, I will address these one by one.

2.2.1 Defining teacher cognition

The study of teacher cognition emerged as a domain of inquiry in education in the

1970s and was recognised as an established research area in language education in the mid to late 1990s (Borg, 1998; Woods, 1996). On the basis of a review of the early teacher cognition research, Borg (2003) stated the general agreement that "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs" (p. 81). This statement has indicated some key issues that teacher cognition research addresses: what it is or is about, where and how it is developed, where and how it is used, and how it can be researched. These issues are the main aspects to be reviewed, as stated at the beginning.

Regarding the meaning of teacher cognition, a widespread definition is Borg's (2003), describing it as "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81). Viewing teachers' mental lives as an inseparable whole unit, I adopt Borg's definition and use teacher cognition as the enveloping term for the present study. Yet for the purpose of definitional clarity, it is necessary to present and discuss some other widely used constructs as well as their definitions. Terms frequently seen in teacher cognition research include *attitudes, conceptions, theories, assumptions, principles, thinking* and *decision-making,* as summarised in Borg (2006), among which *knowledge* and *beliefs* have appeared the most prominent and remained the most enduring.

Among the researchers using the term *teacher knowledge* (Borg, 2005; Gatbonton, 1999; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999; Spada & Massey, 1992), Shulman (1986, 1987) has been well acknowledged and frequently cited. According to Shulman, *teacher knowledge* could be organised into seven categories: subject-matter content knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; curricular knowledge; general pedagogical knowledge; knowledge of learners and their characteristics; knowledge of educational context; and knowledge of educational ends. By this categorisation, Shulman presented a knowledge system which entailed and specified various components of teacher knowledge, ranging from that regarding the macro education context to the micro subject matter as well as learners and learning outcomes. In this sense, it has well answered the question: what do teachers have cognitions about? However, although it looks a rather comprehensive system, some elements are missing, for example, teachers'

knowledge about themselves. Golombek (1998) coined the term *personal practical knowledge (PPK)*, in which he embraced teachers' knowledge of self, of subject matter, of instruction, and of context. Apparently, Golombek's PPK complements Shulman's system with the element of teachers' self-images. Yet it is also obvious that the two concepts overlap a great deal. Borg (2006) has reviewed the terms used in teacher cognition research comprehensively; therefore I will not rehearse much more here, but intend, by these two examples, to demonstrate the rich substance embraced in the notion of teacher knowledge, as well as the overlapping nature of different terms.

Like *knowledge*, *beliefs* has appeared to be another much-used term favoured by many researchers in the teacher cognition field (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Flores, 2001; Johnson, 1992). Among these researchers, Pajares (1992) defined beliefs as "as individual's judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgement that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend and do" (p. 316). This definition indicates the evaluative nature of teachers' beliefs, and draws attention to the complexities of examining these beliefs due to their invisibility.

Seeing teachers' beliefs in general as a term too broad and diffuse to be operational, Pajares (1992) proposed the expression *education beliefs about* and identified six aspects: confidence to affect students' performance; the nature of knowledge; causes of teachers' or students' performance; perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth; confidence to perform specific tasks; and specific subjects or disciplines (p. 316). Like Shulman's map of teacher knowledge, Pajares presented a comprehensive overview of teachers' beliefs. This overview specifies various constituents of teachers' beliefs, and importantly, complements Shulman's teacher knowledge system with teachers' views about their self-images. Yet it is noted that the more general curriculum and education context dimensions are absent here. A possible reason for the absence may be that such elements as context and curriculum are more factual propositions than personal attitudes or evaluation, which is a rough difference between knowledge and beliefs according to Pajares. In addition, while having specified various aspects of beliefs, Pajares admitted that the construct was difficult to define, saying that it was "at best a game of player's choice" of the many "aliases" under which beliefs were

disguised: attitudes, values, judgements, to name a few (Pajares, 1992, p. 309).

Like Pajares, some other researchers have also tried to differentiate the notions knowledge and belief, yet the results were not very optimistic. One example was that Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989), while trying to separate teachers' knowledge and belief about subject matter for the purposes of clarity, concluded that the distinction was "blurry at best" (p. 31). Woods (1996) came to a similar conclusion, and Verloop, Van Driel, and Meijer (2001) explained that "in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined" (p. 446).

Besides knowledge and beliefs, there have also been a number of other concepts used in teacher cognition research (Borg, 2006, pp. 36-39, 47-49). Seeing the proliferation of terms has led to a "definitional confusion" (Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988), Borg (2006) expressed a strong resistance to the continued introduction of new terms, and argued for "a shared set of concepts and definitions" for "a greater sense of unity and coherence" (p. 272) in the research field. Woods (2009), however, responded that the issue was not "an overwhelming array of concepts" (Borg, 2006, p. 35), but rather an array of terms; therefore what needed more attention was "not the proliferation of terms but explicating the relationships among the concepts – the relationships of beliefs to knowledge, of experience to verbal learning, and of both of these to action and practice" (p. 513).

Addressing the issue of terminological relationships, Woods and Çakır (1997) developed Woods' (1996) perception of BAK (beliefs, assumptions and knowledge), and reconceptualised teacher knowledge in terms of distinctive knowledge descriptors (e.g., *personal-impersonal* and *theoretical-practical*), depicting different dimensions of teacher knowledge. According to Woods (1996), the notion of BAK views beliefs, assumptions and knowledge on spectrums, highlighting the developmental nature of teachers' decision-making and interpretive process. Subsequently, Woods and Çakır (1997) presented several spectrums of knowledge. The first one is that between impersonal knowledge and personal knowledge: the former refers to "what is considered to be objectively and universally true (typically referred to, as noted, by the unmodified term

knowledge), while the latter is "that which is true for a particular individual and therefore subjective and personal (often referred to by the term *beliefs*)" (p. 383, italics in original). A second spectrum is between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge: the former refers to "knowledge that is 'in the mind' and explicitly articulated and consciously transmitted", while the latter indicates "knowledge that is 'in the body' and implicitly embodied, experientially-derived, and unconsciously or "automatically" instantiated" (p. 384). Similarly, other spectrums can be identified under the broad term knowledge. Furthermore, the concept of knowledge can be depicted by other spectrums of terms, such as knowledge to be used versus knowledge in use, and pedagogical knowledge versus content knowledge. The descriptors at the ends of different spectrums (e.g. impersonal knowledge and theoretical knowledge, personal knowledge and practical knowledge) are not synonyms. Rather, they portray different dimensions of knowledge. Within and across spectrums, there is "a dynamic interaction among these dimensions which allow for the development or evolution of a teacher's knowledge" (Woods & Çakır, 2011, p. 383).

By illustrating teacher knowledge system in spectrum, Woods and Çakır have incorporated various terms into a network and built up the relationships between/among them. Moreover, by this view, the contextual and dynamic nature of teacher knowledge is well elaborated and reinforced, in that the placement of any knowledge is contextualised, situated and dynamic in a negotiated and interpretive process. For example, the term *knowledge about language* coined by Borg (2005) primarily falls on the spectrum of pedagogical-content knowledge. However, depending on the extent to which it goes into the language detail or language teaching or teaching in general, its placement on the spectrum is movable. Furthermore, across the spectrum, when this knowledge is more shared than individual-specific, or vice-versa, it is placed more towards either the impersonal or personal end. Additionally, depending on the extent to which this knowledge is explicitly articulated, or implicitly embodied, it is more in the form of theoretical knowledge, or the opposite, more practical.

To further illustrate the situated and dynamic nature of teachers' knowing and doing, Woods and Çakır gave an extreme argument, saying teachers always do what they know.

> If we take this argument to the extreme, to this specific moment and this specific place, we might even say that, in acting, we always "do what we know" - or at least we did what we knew at that specific moment in time. If we did not do it, then it means that - at that particular moment in time - we did not "know" it. (Woods & Çakır, 2011, p. 386)

In this way, knowledge and beliefs, knowledge and action or knowing and doing are all brought together in an interactive and dynamic entity, in which any knowledge of teachers is contextually determined and situated.

On the whole, teacher cognition is a complex dynamic system, with personalised, practically-oriented, and context-sensitive features (Borg, 2003; Feryok, 2010; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Tudor, 2003; Woods & Çakır, 2011). Its complexity has been well demonstrated in the wide range of concepts and constructs (and their sub-types) involved as well as the various definitions and interpretations of those concepts and constructs – similar or different, overlapping or interweaving. The practical orientation of teacher cognition is self-evident, as the ultimate goal of teacher cognition research is to better understand teachers' cognition and their teaching practice (Borg, 2006). As to the personalised nature of teacher cognition, it is apparent that each individual teacher is unique and has his or her own unique cognitions, of different types and involving different subjects (Feryok, 2010). The contextual nature of teacher cognition is highlighted by many researchers in different expressions: context-sensitive (Borg, 2003); contextualised and situated (Woods & Çakır, 2011); and socioculturally-mediated (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). The dynamics of teacher cognition is related to development and changes, which are non-linear (Feryok, 2010) and, to use Tudor's (2003) metaphor, reveal "a kaleidoscope of detail" (p. 10). Lastly and importantly, the complex teacher cognitive world can be a system (or systems) (Borg, 2003; Feryok, 2008; Feryok, 2010), that is, it is not just a collection of different thoughts, but interactive and mutually-influenced cognitive elements forming cohesive unities (Feryok, 2008).

To summarise this section, various concepts of teacher cognition have been defined from various perspectives. Among these, knowledge and belief are the

two most frequently used terms regarding teacher cognition. The most influential interpretation of teacher knowledge has been given by Shulman (1986, 1987) and that of teacher beliefs by Pajares (1992). Borg (2006) argued for controlled terminologies for conceptual unity and coherence in teacher cognition research. Woods and Çakır (1997) developed Woods' (1996) spectrum view on teacher knowledge and highlighted the contextual, situated and dynamic nature of teacher knowledge with the view of spectrums of teacher knowledge.

On the basis of the review in this section, I take a holistic view on teacher cognition and adopt Borg's (2003) definition for this study – knowledge, belief and thinking as an inseparable whole unit of teachers' mental lives – because the primary purpose this study is not to define teachers' mental world or to label its different components, but to better understand its interaction with, as well as effect on, teachers' classroom practice.

2.2.2 Sources of teacher cognition

The above section has reviewed the understanding of the concept of teacher cognition and the complex cognitive world of language teachers. This section will look at important sources of the various knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts that language teachers have, seeking an understanding of their complex mental activities. Four aspects have been much discussed and considered to be contributing to language teachers' cognitions: prior language learning experience; teacher education; current and previous classroom practices; and contextual factors.

A primary source for the development of language teacher cognition is their prior language learning experience – their "apprenticeship of observation" as termed by Lortie (1975). Studies have demonstrated that teachers' perceptions are informed by their experiences as learners in several aspects, such as teachers' personality and sense of commitment, teacher-student relationship and learning environment (Bailey et al., 1996); images of teachers, materials, activities, and classroom organisation (Johnson, 1994); instructional strategies (Numrich, 1996), and error correction (Golombek, 1998); communicative learning (Woods, 1996); using grammatical terminology (Borg, 1999); and learning strategies (Eisenstein-

Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997). While Freeman (1992) claimed the function of such "apprenticeship of observation" as de facto guides for teachers, Nisbett and Ross (1980) highlighted the stubbornness of such apprenticeship and its resistance to change even in the face of contradictory evidence.

Another potential contributor to teacher cognition is teacher education. However, in contrast to the consensus on the large impact of prior learning experience on the teacher cognition development, findings about the contribution of teacher education to teacher cognition development vary considerably. Responses to the statement that trainees' cognitions have changed during the teacher education courses ranged widely from strong agreement (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Sendan & Roberts, 1998), to varying degrees of disagreement (Kagan, 1992; Peacock, 2001). A closer examination of the extent and type of change further shows that findings differ between cognitive and behavioural changes (Almarza, 1996; Freeman, 1993), between changes in the content and in the structure (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Sendan & Roberts, 1998) and among different individuals (Bailey et al., 1996). A possible reason for the different findings can be the research methods and instruments which different studies adopted. However, interestingly, even studies conducted through similar instruments (MacDonald, Badger, & White, 2001; Peacock, 2001) came to contrasting conclusions (Borg, 2003). The diverse findings of these studies reinforce the complexities of how to research teacher cognition, which, again, stress the crucial role that appropriate research paradigms as well as approaches and instruments play in teacher cognition research.

As to the contribution of classroom practice on language teacher cognition, it has been generally accepted that teachers' cognitions and practices interact bi-directionally with each other and are mutually informing (Borg, 2009). Beliefs drive actions, but experiences and reflection on actions lead to changes in, or additions to, the beliefs themselves (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). Because teachers use their knowledge in response to a particular practice in the context, the practice reshapes that knowledge (Golombek, 1998). Studies comparing experienced and less experienced language teachers have also found that cognitions of the two groups of teachers differ in various aspects, for example, their primary concern of

classroom teaching (Nunan, 1992), improvisational teaching performances (Richards, 1998), and the roles of teachers and students (Woods, 1996). Thus, there is sound evidence that teachers' cognitions are influenced by their accumulated teaching experience in classroom practices (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999).

The effect of contextual factors on the development of teacher cognition can, first of all, be seen from the influence that contextual factors exert on classroom practice. As Borg (2006) illustrated in his diagram (see Figure 4), contextual factors seamlessly surround classroom practice and they together affect and contribute to language teacher cognition. What I wish to emphasise here, however, is the wider context from which language teachers live and develop their cognitions. Apart from the formal school learning and professional training, other opportunities in the wider context include reading books or articles by influential authorities, and attending conferences or seminars (Barnard & Burns, 2012a). Meanwhile, according to Barnard and Burns, teachers interact and learn from many other people including their learners, colleagues and other teachers in a wider community of practice and even the "significant others" in their personal lives (p. 3); and another cannot-be-neglected aspect is "the imposition of authority" such as by "school principals, inspectors, examination boards or ministries of education" (p. 3).

Personal history and specific experience of classrooms which define preconceptions of education (i.e. teachers, teaching)

May impact on existing cognitions though, especially when unacknowledged, these may limit its impact

Schooling → **Professional Coursework**

Beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, conceptions, principles, thinking, decision-making

LANGUAGE TEACHER COGNITION

About teaching, teachers, learners, learning, subject matter, curricula, materials, activities, self, colleagues, assessment, context

Contextual *Factors*

Classroom Practice
including practice teaching

Around and inside the classroom, context mediates cognitions and practice. May lead to changes in cognitions or create tension between cognitions and classroom practices

Defined by the interaction of cognitions and contextual factors. In turn, classroom experience influences cognitions unconsciously and/or through conscious reflection

Figure 4: Elements and processes in language teacher cognition
Source: Borg (2006, p. 283). Reprinted with author's permission.

To summarise, taking an extreme perspective, it can be said that sources of teachers' cognitions can be anything, anybody, or anywhere in relation to the teachers. Indeed it is so, as teacher cognition in its broad sense can be about "all aspects of their work" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). The review in this section reveals that, while some sources of teacher cognition have been well considered and researched, such as teachers' prior learning experience and teacher education, some have only been mentioned but not fully considered or studied, such as "the significant others" in teachers' personal lives (Barnard & Burns, 2012a). Although the present study is not going to focus on any particular source in relation to the development of teacher cognition, it is worth emphasising that language teachers' cognitions derive from many possible channels and are inspired by many different

factors. In addition, although these sources, like the concept of teacher cognition itself, have taken various forms in various names, they can be placed into two categories: learning and experience (or doing). Researchers need to be aware that teachers learn by various means, through various opportunities, and perhaps from various people or places; and in a similar manner, teachers enhance their experience. In pursuing where and how language teachers develop their cognitions, it will suffice to have these two foci (learning and experience/doing) in their broad sense. Therefore, it is important for researchers to have an open mind in examining various factors that may influence teachers' cognition, and "hold inferences in check" and use them "parsimoniously" (Spindler & Spindler, 1987). For example, it is important for researchers to be aware that any belief may be realised in several varied practices, and a single practice may reflect more than one belief (Breen et al., 2001).

2.2.3 Relationship between teacher cognition and practice

Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 have presented a basic understanding of the concept of language teacher cognition and various aspects that contribute to teachers' cognitive development. This section will discuss the practical use of teachers' knowledge and beliefs, mainly in classrooms. In brief, teachers' beliefs inform and guide their practices on the one hand, although such guidance may be explicit or tacit; and on the other hand, teachers' practices may appear to deviate from their stated beliefs. Researchers have different views on the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practices, directing attention to various contextual factors in the wider sociocultural environment that teachers live in. I will now move on with more details.

It is generally accepted that teachers' beliefs provide a basis for action (Borg, 2011) and that beliefs affect and guide teachers' decision making (Arnett & Turnbull, 2008). Teachers' cognitions function as the guide for their classroom actions, under which teachers make their instructional decisions according to, or departing from, their lesson plans. To understand the convergences and divergences between teachers' cognitions and their actions, it is crucial to know the primary principles or guidelines on which language teachers make their instructional decisions. Studies into this issue have revealed some commonly-

expressed concerns in classroom instruction, such as engaging learners in facilitating cognitive process for language learning (Breen, 1991), language management (Gatbonton, 1999), ensuring students' understanding and motivation as well as classroom management (Johnson, 1992), pacing and timing as well as the quantity and quality of teacher talk (Nunan, 1992). Richards (1996) reported a series of maxims with which teachers rationalise their classroom decisions, ranging from general pedagogical issues (e.g., the maxim of encouragement) to subject matters (e.g., the maxim of accuracy), and from teaching-concerned elements (e.g., the maxim of planning) to learner-concerned dimensions (e.g., the maxim of involvement). Burns (1996) recognised three types of teacher thinking in relation to contextual factors: institutional culture; language, learning and learners; and instructional activities. Bartels (1999) identified three types of most-frequently-used knowledge: knowledge of the target language learning, that of students' interlanguage, and that of curriculum and materials. Feryok (2008) categorised her participant's cognition about CLT in terms of language teaching, learners in the classroom, and teachers in the classroom.

Superficially, the findings of these studies were presented in a considerable diversity of terms and concepts which seemed messy and incompatible. However, if associated to teachers' knowledge or belief system(s) as discussed in Section 2.2.1 – for example, Shulman's (1986, 1987) knowledge system or Parajes' (1992) belief system – most of these themes fall into certain given categories and can be related to one another as part(s) of teachers' whole cognitive unity. In this sense, the process of instructional decision making is in effect a matter of different aspects of teacher knowledge/belief competing for priorities within teachers' cognition system, depending on different teaching/learning objectives and various contextual factors. For example, while the concern about students' cognitive process is more a pedagogical issue, consideration for language items is more subject matter-oriented. Thus, while some teachers are more concerned with the subject matter, for example, language items (Gatbonton, 1999), some others focus more on the pedagogical issues, for example, classroom management (Johnson, 1992). Additionally, while some teachers focus more on the learner factors or learning process (Breen, 1991), some others focus more on teacher images or teaching quality (Nunan, 1992).

While in many cases (as in the above-described studies) teachers are able to articulate the instructional beliefs or principles for their classroom decisions, there are also occasions when teachers deal with classroom issues by intuition without explicit rationales – an intuitive problem-solving approach (Polanyi, 1958, 1966). Different from such a tacit relationship between teacher knowledge and practice, Feryok and Pryde (2012) presented an alternative one in terms of "images". Drawing on Gal'perin's (1989) orienting activity, Feryok and Pryde presented two forms for images – sensory images and abstract images, representing perceptions and concepts. In Feryok and Pryde's study, the teacher held three sensory images (the teacher as a guide; the learner in search of self; and significance of everyday English), which informed the teacher's practice and were conceptualised into his pedagogical principles. In this sense, the images served a useful instrument for integrating teachers' practice with theory, or "experiential knowledge" with "theoretical knowledge" (p. 442).

Studies have also identified various reasons for which teachers did not, or could not, carry out the teaching procedure as planned. Bailey et al. (1996) reported a number of principles based on which teachers departed from their lesson plans, such as, to serve the common good, to accommodate students' learning styles, or to promote students' involvement. Other reasons for such departures which researchers have identified included unexpected difficulties the students experienced in completing the planned (Ulichny, 1996), "on-the-spot modification" to accommodate "students' engagement and interest level" (Richards, 1998, p. 115), student misbehaviour or non-comprehension as well as teacher factors (Smith, 1996), and so on.

Clearly, contextual factors play an important role in the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice. They function as mediators determining "the extent to which teachers can act in accordance with their beliefs", therefore needing to be "part of any analysis" of such studies (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 381). In this respect, Woods's (1996) longitudinal study made a distinct contribution to the field with a range of external and internal factors that influenced teachers' decision making. While the internal factors relate more to the chronological and logical relationships amongst instructional decisions, external factors involve more the complex situational context – such as the issues of

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photocopying and students' turnout. These factors can explain, to a certain extent, why teachers, under certain situations, follow or depart from their planned lessons.

Such departures as described above are often seen as evidence that teachers' beliefs do not coincide with their classroom practices, and the differences in between have been viewed as undesirable with such negative descriptions as "incongruence", "mismatch", "inconsistency" or "discrepancy" (Phipps & Borg, 2009). However, Borg (2006) pointed out that, rather than seeing these differences as a shortcoming, research showed that "such departures are the result of the constant interaction between teachers' pedagogical choices and their perceptions of the instructional context, particularly of the students, at any particular time" (p. 93). Phipps and Borg (2009) further argued for a more positive perspective on such differences with the concept "tensions" (p. 380), which referred to "divergences among different forces or elements in the teacher's understanding of the school context, the subject matter, or the students" (Freeman, 1993, p. 488). Phipps and Borg viewed these different forces or elements in teachers' cognitions as the "belief sub-systems", which co-exist in the teacher belief system. Phipps and Borg related these concepts (beliefs and sub-beliefs) to "core beliefs and peripheral beliefs" (Green, 1971; Pajares, 1992), and argued that tensions between teachers' cognitions and practices are "a reflection of their belief sub-systems, and of the different forces which influence their thinking and behaviour" (p. 381).

Research has also provided other explanations for the lack of correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) suggested the non-synchronicity between changes in beliefs and changes in practices, while Schutz (1970) recognised the possibility of propositional incompatibility within a person's belief system. Moreover, Graden (1996) proposed the notion of multiple beliefs systems, within which beliefs in one system, such as beliefs about the use of the target language in the classroom, may periodically conflict with beliefs in another system, such as beliefs about student factors.

While these explanations differ in the perspectives as well as the notions and concepts presented, common threads can be seen throughout. Teachers' thinking

is a complicated dynamic system or network, as discussed earlier, constituted of numbers of thinking parts or fragments. Within the system, these parts or fragments interact with one another, competing, conflicting or compromising, with the context as the mediator. Looking back to the term and concepts discussed earlier – teacher knowledge categories by Shulman (1986, 1987), teacher belief category by (Pajares, 1992), spectrums of knowledge (Woods & Çakır, 2011), tensions between core and peripheral beliefs (Phipps & Borg, 2009), multiple beliefs systems (Graden, 1996), propositional incompatibility (Schutz, 1970), and the belief and practice non-synchronicity (Richardson et al., 1991) – they are by nature very much connected. Superficially, teachers' cognitions and practices show considerable divergences. Yet "practices *were* consistent with deeper, more general beliefs about learning" (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 387, italics in original), or in Woods and Çakır's (2011) words, teachers always know what they do in a certain given context. The implication of this, however, for language teacher cognition research is that "it is not enough to identify differences, or tensions, between teachers' beliefs and practices; rather, attempts need to be made to explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tensions" (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 388). Put simply, the crucial matter is to explore and explain the mediating means – the context, which calls for a sociocultural perspective for research into this area.

In summary, teachers' cognitions inform classroom instructional decisions. With such information, teachers follow or depart from their lesson plans. While congruence between teachers' thinking and doing sounds to be more a positive goal that teachers should endeavour to achieve, what has been found in reality includes both dissonance and congruence. While convergences are more expected, divergences are revealed in a great diversity. The convergences and divergences between teachers' beliefs and practices reveal significant influence of the socio-cultural contexts, implying the necessity for a socio-cultural approach for research in this regard.

2.2.4 Studies on teacher cognition and practice

This section will present an overview of empirical studies on language teacher cognition in general, while those focusing particularly on learner autonomy will

be dealt with separately in the Section 2.3. Four aspects are examined: who has been studied; what has been studied; where the studies have been conducted; and how the studies have been conducted.

Borg (2006) categorised research participants in two main groups: pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. In addition to the studies reviewed by Borg (2003, 2006), there have been a number of recent ones: for example, Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006) and Wong (2010) on the former; and Wyatt and Borg (2011) and Tseng, Cheng, and Lin (2011) on the latter. In addition, comparative studies of the two groups of teachers are also found in the field (Gao & Ma, 2011; Polat, 2010; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). Moreover, among the studies examining in-service teachers, some focused on the novice teachers (Farrell & Kun, 2008), some on experienced teachers (Farrell, 2011), and some compared the two (Gatbonton, 2008). Furthermore, studies examining in-service teachers can also be categorised into those focussing on university teachers (Yang & Gao, 2013), on secondary school teachers (Benson, 2010), on primary school teachers (Drew, Oostdam, & van Toorenburg, 2007) and on early childhood teachers (Lim & Torr, 2007). These studies display a great diversity in the participants involved in language teacher cognition research, suggesting this area has been gaining increasingly significant attention as "an established field of inquiry" (Borg, 2009, p. 4). However, what should merit research attention is that, compared to those on other levels, secondary school language teachers had been "the focus of very little attention" (Borg, 2006, p. 274) and studies on these teachers had been "extremely deficient" in China (Hao, 2010, p. 157).

As to specific domains that language teacher cognition research has covered, the three most-investigated areas are the teaching of grammar, reading, and writing (Borg, 2003, 2006). Research interest has remained in these domains recently – for example, Jean and Simard (2011) and Phipps and Borg (2009) on grammar teaching, Cross (2011) on literacy instruction, and Lee (2010) on teaching of writing – but have expanded considerably into other areas, including speaking (Chen & Goh, 2011), listening (Lee & Bang, 2011), vocabulary (Gao & Ma, 2011), pronunciation (Baker & Murphy, 2011; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010), use of technology (Li & Ni, 2011), CLT (Feryok, 2008), and task-based learning (Lin & Wu, 2012). Through these studies, it can be seen that teacher cognition has

covered an extensive range of curricular foci as well as language teaching and learning approaches. Importantly, signs of autonomous learning have been, to a greater or lesser extent, reflected in most of these studies. For example, Gao and Ma's (2011) findings confirmed the importance of raising teachers' awareness of language learning strategy so as to help them to empower learners to take control (citing Benson, 2007); and the Armenian teacher in Feryok (2008) believed that language learning should be realised through knowledge co-construction, awareness-developing, and learning through doing (p. 232). Such embodiment of autonomy, if taking into account the centrality of autonomy in any learning, is indeed not surprising. However, studies of teacher cognition focusing particularly on autonomy have appeared limited. As Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012b) asserted, it was clear that "language teachers' perspectives on what autonomy means have not been awarded much attention" (p. 283).

Regarding the contexts in which language teacher cognition research has been conducted, Borg (2009) pointed out that the scope of contexts investigated was not representative of the global language teaching settings. Many studies had been carried out with "native speaker teachers working with small groups of motivated adult learners studying in universities or private institutions", while knowledge had been available about state school settings (primary and secondary) "where languages are taught by non-native teachers to large classes of learners who, particularly in the case of English, may not be studying the language voluntarily" (p. 4). This is particularly true within the context of China. Therefore, understanding about teacher cognition lent from those English-speaking contexts is limited. The geographical contexts of teacher cognition research have expanded considerably in the last few years with more Asian countries covered, such as China (Li & Ni, 2011), Japan (Nakata, 2011), Korea (Lee & Bang, 2011), Oman (Borg, 2011), Iran (Rajabi, Kiany, & Maftoon, 2012), Turkey (Woods & Çakır, 2011), and Vietnam (Le & Barnard, 2009). However, within Asia, particularly in mainland China, very few studies have been found addressing the secondary school settings in relation to teacher cognition.

In respect to research methodology, due to the unobservable nature of teacher cognition, a crucial issue in this domain of inquiry is what counts as evidence (Borg, 2003, 2006). A wide range of strategies and methods have been employed

to collect data in language teacher cognition research. Borg (2006) categorised these strategies and methods into four types: self-report instruments, verbal commentaries, observations and reflective writing. Self-report instruments are able to elicit teachers' beliefs, knowledge and attitudes to a certain extent, and have the advantage of collecting large amount of data quickly and economically, therefore have been widely used in the field, for example, Allen (2002) using questionnaire, Johnson (1992) using scenario rating, and Andrews (1999) using tests. However, it is obvious that such "paper and pencil measures" (Richardson et al., 1991) are inadequate to capture the complexities of teachers' mental world due to their many limitations, such as the mismatches between the intended meanings by the instrument designers and interpreted meanings by the respondents, between the respondents' precise cognitions and the limited general description in the instruments (Borg, 2006), and between teachers' conscious articulated knowledge and beliefs and those that are hidden and unconsciously held (Kagan, 1990). Moreover, what cannot be neglected is the informative nature of such instruments, that is, the instruments may impose on the respondents' knowledge that they do not hold, or at least have not held at the time they are faced with, for example, a questionnaire.

In short, the review in this section has shown that language teacher cognition is now a well-established and increasingly attractive domain of inquiry, having involved a wide range of research foci, participants, and contexts. However, there remains "a significant gap" in exploring language teachers' understanding of the concept of LA (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, p. 3); and it is especially true with language teachers in the context of Chinese secondary schools. In next section, I will look at this issue in more depth and detail.

2.3 Empirical studies of teachers' cognition and practice in relation to learner autonomy

This section is an up-to-date review of empirical studies on teachers' cognition about LA, which was initially drafted in 2012 prior to the data collection but has been updated continually as the project proceeded. It entails 20 publications (see Table 1), including Barnard and Li's (2016b) recent collection of case studies. These studies have been identified mainly by two means: key words searching and

snowball searching. By the former, such key concepts as teacher cognition and learner autonomy were searched through the university library database. By the latter, I checked item by item the references of the identified key sources, among which Borg's (2015) up-to-date bibliography has facilitated significantly. In addition, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) was utilised for the relevant Chinese literature. Studies with similar concepts to LA are also included in the review, for example, "learner-centred instruction" in Jing (2013). However, studies lacking empirical data or not language-teacher-focused were excluded, despite the relevance shown in titles (e.g., Benson, 2008; Phan, 2012).

Table 1: Studies on teacher cognition about LA

Source	Focus	Context	Methods
Camilleri (1999)	Learner autonomy: The teachers' views	300+ school teachers in 6 European contexts	Questionnaires
Chan (2003)	Autonomous language learning: The teachers' perspectives	41 teachers & 508 students; university; Hong Kong China	Questionnaires; Interviews
Camilleri (2007)	Pedagogy for autonomy, teachers' attitudes and institutional change: A case study	48 student teachers & practising teachers; Malta.	Questionnaires
Martinez (2008)	The subjective theories of student teachers: Implications for teacher education and research on learner autonomy	16 student teachers of different languages; LA course; university; Germany	Questionnaires; Interviews
Al-Shaqsi (2009)	Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy	120 teachers of English; state schools; Oman	Questionnaires
Balçıkanlı (2010)	Learner autonomy in language learning: Student teachers' beliefs	112 student teachers of English; Turkey	Questionnaires; Interviews
Bullock (2011)	Learner self-assessment: An investigation into teachers' beliefs	10 teachers; Years 14-16; Ukraine	Questionnaires; Interviews
Nakata (2011)	Teachers' readiness for promoting learner autonomy: A study of Japanese EFL high school teachers	84 English teachers; high school; Japan	Questionnaires; Interviews
Reinders and Lazaro (2011)	Beliefs, identity and motivation in implementing autonomy: The teachers' perspective	Advisors; 46 self-access centres; 5 countries	Interviews
Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b)	Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy	61 teachers; university; Oman	Questionnaires; Interviews; Workshops

Al Asmari (2013)	Practices and prospects of learner autonomy: Teachers' perceptions	60 teachers; university; Saudi Arabia	Questionnaires
Feryok (2013)	Teaching for learner autonomy: The teacher's role and sociocultural theory	An experienced EFL teacher; an immersion programme in New Zealand with Japanese college students	Observations; Field notes; Interviews
Ding (2013)	An investigation into university teachers' cognitions about learner autonomy	108 English teachers; 5 universities; China	Questionnaires; Interviews
Jing (2013)	Influence of English language teachers' beliefs upon their learner-centred instruction: A case study of junior middle school teachers in Handan, Hebei province	3 English teachers; secondary school; China	Interviews; Observations; Documentary analysis
Al-Busaidi and Al-Maamari (2014)	Exploring university teachers' understanding of learner autonomy.	200+ teachers of multiple nationalities; university; Oman	Questionnaires; Interviews; Workshops
Nguyen (2014)	Learner autonomy in language learning: Teachers' beliefs	188 EFL teachers; 10 universities; Vietnam	Questionnaires; Interviews; Observations
Shahsavari (2014)	Efficiency, feasibility and desirability of learner autonomy based on teachers" and learners' point of views	150 experienced teachers & 150 advanced students; a language institute; Iran	Questionnaires; Interviews
Salimi and Ansari (2015)	Learner autonomy: Investigating Iranian English teachers' beliefs	35 EFL teachers; private institutes; Iran	Questionnaires
Barnard and Li (2016b)	Language learner autonomy: Teacher beliefs and practices in Asian contexts	8 case studies; EFL teachers at varied levels in Asian contexts	Questionnaires; Interviews; Workshops
Wang and Wang (2016)	Developing learner autonomy: Chinese university EFL teachers' perceptions and practices	44 EFL teachers; university; China	Questionnaires; Interviews; Workshops

An overview of the empirical studies

The table reveals some general features of research into teacher cognition about LA. First, chronologically, only a few studies had been conducted until 2006 – when Borg's book was published. Second, in terms of the contexts, these studies have covered a range of geographical areas including some Asian countries, as well as educational settings of different levels such as universities and primary schools, yet studies on secondary school teachers in mainland China have been

few. Third, regarding research methods, questionnaires and interviews have been the dominating instruments employed for data collection, yet few studies (none by 2012) have drawn on data from classroom observations.

Now I will move on to discuss these studies in more detail, first individually in a brief manner concerning the focus, context, participants and research methods, and then collectively by the themes of the main findings.

Camilleri (1999) was the earliest work found in relation to teachers' cognitions about learner autonomy. It was a series of studies conducted with over 300 school teachers (primary and secondary) in six European countries (Malta, The Netherlands, Belorussia, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia). Aiming to find out teachers' attitude towards learner autonomy, the study employed a 13-item (32-sub-item) questionnaire regarding various aspects wherein teachers might involve students in decision making. Findings showed that the teachers were positive with some aspects but negative with some others. Camilleri (2007) was one of the contributors of the Camilleri (1999) series of studies working on the Malta context. She duplicated her study in the same context of Malta in 2005, with the questionnaire remaining the same but the participants comprising both in-service and pre-service student teachers. Defined as comparative in nature, the study found a generally more positive attitude towards learner autonomy among the teachers in 2005 in comparison with those in 1999 study, yet not much difference was shown between the student teachers and those in service. The same questionnaire was used by Balçıkanlı (2010). This was an investigation into the beliefs about learner autonomy of a group of 112 student teachers who were taking a learner autonomy course in a Turkish university. A notable amendment in this study was that 20 of the questionnaire takers were followed up with interviews. While the questionnaire generated some similar findings with the other two studies using the same instrument, the interviews revealed some diverse opinions, which were interesting yet not fully explored. Consequently, while claiming that the student teachers in the study had a very-well-structured notion of learner autonomy, Balçıkanlı expressed the concern about the potential gaps between teachers' knowledge and their practice.

Concerning student teachers, an earlier study was Martinez (2008) in the context

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of a German university. The participants in this study were a group of 16 teachers of Italian, Spanish and German, who like those in Balçıkanlı (2010), were also taking a course about learner autonomy. A noticeable point in this study was that it explicitly stated the exploratory interpretive paradigm as the epistemological guide, under which the data was collected through questionnaires and interviews – generally the same as in Balçıkanlı (2010). Interestingly, findings from the two studies – both focusing on student teachers – had little in common. The situation became more interesting when another survey study – Al-Shaqsi (2009) was brought into comparison, one conducted with in-service secondary school teachers in Oman. Notably, the questionnaire, rather than an existing and tested one, was specifically devised by the author for this study. A total of 92 schools were involved and eventually 100 questionnaires were collected and analysed. Both Martinez (2008) and Al-Shaqsi (2009) identified the characteristics of autonomous learners, yet the points generated appeared to have little to do with each other. This will be further discussed later in this section where findings are presented by themes.

While the studies reviewed above are connected with each other in one way or another (methodologically or contextually), two other separate studies are also worth reference: Bullock (2011) and Reinders and Lazaro (2011). The former inquired into teachers' beliefs in a specific aspect of learner autonomy – self-assessment, and the latter shed light on the beliefs of teachers in a setting other than normal classrooms – self-access centres. Although the research methods in these two studies were much the same as in others – questionnaires and interviews – the teachers' voices from these studies were about more specific issues within autonomy and therefore worthy of attention for the purposes of the present study.

The next two studies on autonomy are based in East Asia (excluding China, which will be separately discussed later in this section). Chan (2003) was among the few early studies on teachers' cognitions about learner autonomy. It was a large-scale survey on learner autonomy in language learning conducted in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. The questionnaire consisted of 53 items in four sections, focusing respectively on teachers' responsibilities, students' abilities, teachers' recognition of the value of autonomy, and students' activities for more autonomy. A total of 508 students and 41 English teachers completed the

questionnaire and follow-up interviews were carried out with some of the questionnaire takers from both groups. The strengths of this study can be seen from the large number of the samples and the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire employed. As one of the few foundation studies, it was indeed a valuable entry. However, as most other studies, the lack of classroom data remained a methodological issue.

Nakata (2011) was a study on teachers' readiness for promoting learner autonomy in the context of a high school in Japan. Data were collected through questionnaires with 80 teachers and interviews with 4 teachers out of the 80. While the aim of the questionnaire was to examine teachers' perceived importance and their actual use of strategies for promoting autonomy, that of the focus group interview was to seek an explanation for the survey results, that is, to explore the reasons behind the results. The questionnaire comprised 23 items concerning strategies to develop autonomy, with the first 10 focusing on strategies that teachers used to help learners to be autonomous, and the remaining 13 on those that teachers adopted to develop their own professional autonomy. The questionnaire in this study was, to some extent, similar to that in Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) in that they both intend to find out the gaps between teachers' thinking and the real world practice. However, as mentioned earlier, neither has drawn on any observed data.

An important contribution to teacher cognition research on learner autonomy was made by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b). This project was also conducted in Oman, the same country as Al-Shaqsi (2009), but differently in a tertiary setting – the Language Centre at Sultan Qaboos University, where 200 teachers of over 25 nationalities were employed teaching English to around 3,500 Omani students preparing for undergraduate study at the University. The instruments employed in this study consisted of a 37-item questionnaire which the authors designed, follow-up interviews and further follow-up workshops. While the questionnaire inquired into teachers' beliefs and practices on a general basis, the interviews went a step further for the details regarding some responses reflected in the questionnaire, and the workshops went another step further using the results of the questionnaires and the interviews for practice-oriented professional development. Moreover, a noticeable strength of the questionnaire employed was it contained a

section differentiating teachers' views on the desirability of some autonomy-oriented activities, as well as the feasibility. By doing so, the gaps between the ideal teacher thinking and the reality were explored to some extent. The strength of this study is therefore obvious in its practical dimension by building up the connection between teachers' cognitions and their practices, and between teachers' research engagement and their professional development. However, as the authors have admitted, no classroom practice was observed in this study. Therefore, the understanding of teachers' cognitions had to rely solely on teachers' reported practice.

Borg and Al-Busaidi 's (2012a, 2012b) study has aroused interest and given rise to a number of studies using the same instruments and procedures (Al-Busaidi & Al-Maamari, 2014; Barnard & Li, 2016b; Salimi & Ansari, 2015; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). Specifically, Al-Busaidi and Al-Maamari (2014) is a further report on Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a, 2012b) project, which focused particularly on the interview data regarding teachers' understandings of the concept of LA and sources of their thinking. Shahsavari (2014) and Salimi and Ansari (2015) are two studies about the Iranian context: the former embracing both teachers and students as participants in an Iranian University aiming at their separate perceptions as well as a comparison, and the latter in relation to teachers in private language institutes. Barnard and Li (2016b) is a collection of case studies conducted in a range of Asian university and school contexts – for example, Nguyen (2016) in six Vietnamese universities, Lengkanawati (2016) in several Indonesian institutions at various levels, Tapinta (2016) in four Thai universities (public and private); and Wang and Wang (2016) in a Chinese university. Undoubtedly, these recent studies have extended Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a, 2012b) study considerably; and especially, Barnard and Li's volume which depicts "more accurately" the practical status of English language learning autonomy in various East Asian settings (Borg, 2016, p. xii), and fills, in a timely manner, the existing gap in this area (Zhang, 2016). However, although these studies have proven Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a, 2012b) approach "extremely useful" (Barnard & Li, 2016a, p. xix), there is an obvious flaw in the approach in that it lacks observation data, which leaves unknown the actual implementation of the various LA-supporting strategies and techniques that the

participants reported.

Apart from Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a, 2012b) study and the series of subsequent ones using their approach, there were other recent studies which developed their own questionnaires (Al Asmari, 2013; Feryok, 2013; Nguyen, 2014). Al Asmari (2013) investigated 60 teachers from different countries teaching English in a university in Saudi Arabia. Based on findings from a questionnaire of 30 items in three categories – current situation, teaching strategies, and futuristic – the study concluded with a call for integrating learner training into the teaching process so as to enhance LA. Nguyen (2014) was a doctoral study inquiring Vietnamese teachers' understanding of LA and their practices. The study surveyed 188 EFL teachers from ten Vietnam universities, followed up with interviews and classroom observations with four of them, and came to the conclusion that the teachers' practices aligned with their beliefs about LA, but in a negative way, that is, neither did they demonstrate genuine understanding of the concept, nor did they show much LA-supporting practice. Although these two studies have provided accurate quantitative evidence for their conclusions, their approaches seemed problematic: Al Asmari (2013) sought teachers' perceptions about LA development, yet there was no item in the survey giving a definition of LA; while in Nguyen (2014), the claim of teacher belief-practice congruence was based on a large-scale survey and observations of a small number of participants selected randomly.

Another study was Feryok (2013), a case study drawing on only qualitative data, comprising observations, field notes, and interviews. The study examined an experienced EFL teacher of Japanese college students on an 11-month immersion program in New Zealand, focusing on the teacher's classroom practice of promoting LA by creating a whole-class ZPD and his understanding of the teacher's role in the practice. The study reported that the teacher handed over control of classroom activity management to students, and that he understood LA as student accountability. Importantly, in light of the fact that most other studies (the ones in Table 1) used and often started with a questionnaire to survey teachers' LA beliefs, Feryok's study provides distinctive insights into teachers' doing and thinking about LA supported by data collected and analysed in a different way. Yet given the much-refined research setting (a focused immersion

programme in an English-speaking country) and participant (an experienced native English teacher), the findings from this study might not be largely applicable for ordinary school classrooms in non-English speaking contexts.

Next, three studies were conducted in Chinese contexts (Ding, 2013; Jing, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2016). Ding (2013) was the only study found in the Chinese database with a clear focus on teachers' cognitions about learner autonomy. The participants recruited were 108 English teachers in several universities in the South of China, and the instruments utilised were, again, questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 23 items in five sections, focusing respectively on teachers' beliefs in learner autonomy and its significance, teachers' roles in the development of learner autonomy, the current situation of teachers' practice to develop learner autonomy, teachers' perceptions about language learning and their own autonomy, and teachers' needs in relation to future training. As shown, the coverage of the 23-item questionnaire was indeed broad, and the findings were unsurprisingly general and superficial. The interviews, focusing more on the contextual factors, did not provide much in regard to teachers' understanding about the notion of learner autonomy.

Jing (2013) was a doctoral study concerning teachers' beliefs and practices about student-centred instruction. As seen, the key concept of this study was not exactly learner autonomy. Yet in recognition of learner-centredness as a key element of learner autonomy, this study is included in this review. The main questions addressed in this study concerned teachers' beliefs about learner-centred instruction and their interaction with classroom practices as well as the contextual factors which affect both. The study was conducted eventually with three secondary school English teachers, who were selected originally from 50 teachers, and then reduced to 10 on the basis of focus group interviews and participants' profile information. The process of participant selection was somewhat confusing as neither the principles nor rationales were provided regarding how the participants were selected. Despite that, multi methods were employed for data collection including interviews, observations and documentary analysis. This can be a strength of this study in that it was one of the very few studies which had drawn on some data from classroom practices.

Wang and Wang (2016) was one of the case studies in Barnard and Li's (2016b) collection. Following generally Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a, 2012b) research procedures, the study surveyed 44 Chinese university EFL teachers, followed by interviews and LA-focused workshops with ten of them. In addition to some common findings with other studies in the volume – showing teachers' general understanding of LA but practices constrained by various contextual factors – the study particularly recognised the benefits of the LA workshops as a useful instrument for teachers' professional development and the significance as well as challenges of maintaining such workshops: at the end of the project (conducted over approximately a year), several teachers specified their subsequent research topics and some made fairly concrete plans (p. 35). Based on the experiences in conducting the project with colleagues and the findings from it, Wang and Wang proposed "a continual teacher support mechanism in the form of a virtual teacher learning community" (p. 23) – an online teacher development forum as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The limitation of this study is obvious, as other ones in the volume, in that the reported teacher practices lacked support of observed data.

So far, I have provided the basic information of the 20 empirical studies in relation to teacher cognition about LA. Next, an analytical discussion is presented in terms of the themes. Content analysis was conducted with each study and comparisons made across studies, based on which findings are categorised in the following themes: 1) teachers' cognitions about LA; 2) teachers' practices about developing LA; 3) relationships between teachers' cognitions and practices about developing LA; and 4) factors that affect teachers' cognitions and practices in developing LA. The first theme can be sub-categorised as follows: 1) the nature of LA; 2) characteristics of autonomous learners; 3) teachers' general attitudes towards LA and recognition of its values; 4) teachers' evaluation of learners' capacity for autonomy; 5) teachers' evaluation of their own LA-oriented practice.

Various terms were used

Teachers' cognitions about LA and CL have been addressed in various concepts. Key terms found in the research questions of the identified studies included beliefs (Al-Shaqsi, 2009; Barnard & Li, 2016b; Nguyen, 2016; Reinders &

Lazaro, 2011; Tapinta, 2016), perceptions (Al Asmari, 2013; Thanh, 2011; Wang & Wang, 2016), views (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Camilleri, 2007; Camilleri, 1999), attitudes (Bullock, 2011; Hijazi & Al-Natour, 2012), conceptualisations (Martinez, 2008), understanding (Bullock, 2011), principles (Balçıkanlı, 2010), and cognition (Ding, 2013). The diversity of terminologies has been noted as and discussed in the teacher cognition literature as a double-edged sword (Borg, 2006). Inconsistent use of concepts was seen in these studies and has caused confusion. For example, Martinez (2008) used teachers' knowledge in the title of his study, yet presented the findings in terms of teachers' conceptualisations.

Nature of learner autonomy

Most of the studies have addressed, to a greater or lesser extent, the nature of learner autonomy. The predominant view was learners' involvement in decision making. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012b) stated explicitly that the most acknowledged feature of learner autonomy is *"learners' having freedom and/or ability to make choices and decisions"* (p. 286). Several studies conveyed similar ideas by using decision making activities to evaluate how autonomous learners were (Camilleri, 1999; Camilleri, 2007; Balçıkanlı, 2010; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016) while Chan (2003) put it mainly as learners' responsibility for certain learning activities. Chan (2003) also presented such teachers' opinions as seeing learner autonomy as *independent learning, self-reliance, and learners taking responsibilities for learning themselves (either by getting independent help from self-access centres or doing extra work themselves)* (p. 48). Also notable in Chan (2003) were *the continuum nature of autonomy* and *autonomy as a situation in which learners have choices.* Martinez (2008) contibuted with voices from student teachers, who made the following statements about autonomy: *1) it is an alternative and a new methodology which is supposed to beneficial for language learning process; 2) it is equated with individualisation and differentiation; 3) it is treated as an absolute, and seems to be too ideal to be attainable; 4) it implies learning in isolation without a teacher.* Balçıkanlı (2010), also focusing on student teachers, claimed that they have a well-constructed notion of learner autonomy including *responsibility, awareness*, and *self-assessment*. In Feryok (2013), the teacher's expectations of LA were presented as students *exerting control* (Benson 2001),

making choices and *taking responsibility* (van Lier 1996). Reinders and Lazaro (2011) brought in opinions from teachers working in the self-access centres, saying developing learner autonomy means *treating learners as equals, offering alternatives to the existing power relations, and teachers' guidance in the form of negotiation.* These findings, if viewed through the lens of different versions of autonomy (Benson, 1997), have demonstrated various facets of autonomy – technical, psychological and political. The social aspect, however, has not been much recognised, except for being lightly mentioned in Chan (2010) with the point learners' seeking help from others. In this respect, Martinez's findings are obviously contradictive in considering autonomy as learning in isolation.

Characteristics of autonomous learners

Two studies measured teachers' beliefs about LA in terms of the main characteristics of autonomous learners. Al-Shaqsi (2009) listed nine features in the questionnaire he devised to describe autonomous learners, and identified the top three as follows: 1) learners *using computers to find information; 2) using a dictionary; and 3) asking the teacher to explain when they do not understand.* Al-Shaqsi also offered the participants – a group of secondary school teachers – opportunities to make additional comments regarding autonomous learners. This generated a list of more features such as *preparing their own glossary, taking the role of teacher and group leader and working in groups,* which were further categorised as *learning independently, self-evaluation, taking responsibility and cooperating* (p. 160). Interestingly, in response to the same question of autonomous learners' characteristics, Martinez (2008) presented very different answers from a group of student teachers who were taking a learner-autonomy-focused course. Rather than a description, the characteristics were presented with the respondents' views on autonomy. Consequently, three points were reported, namely 1) viewing autonomy as closely related to communication, autonomous learners take an authentic communicative approach; 2) in recognition of the emotional and cognitive dimensions of autonomy, autonomous learners take an intrinsically motivated "self-determined" (Deci & Ryan, 1985) approach; 3) being aware of the relationship between autonomy and "deep approaches" to language learning (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2002), autonomous learners take an expert approach to language learning based on previous knowledge acquired while

learning other languages.

Viewed in comparison, Martinez (2008) and Al-Shaqsi (2009) reached little overlap, with the former being rather theoretical while the latter extremely practice-oriented. However, if associated with their respective participants – student teachers taking an autonomy-focused course in the former, and in-service school teachers in the latter – the divergent findings are not surprising. Further evidence can be obtained from another comparison between Martinez (2008) and Balçıkanlı (2010), which aligned in that the student teachers under study both demonstrated good knowledge of autonomy, particularly theoretical understanding. An implication for teacher cognition research is that, as Borg (2006) warned, we must always be mindful of the potential gap between teachers' theoretical beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Another inference from these survey studies can be that what comes out of a questionnaire is indeed largely determined by what items are in the questionnaire. It suggests that starting an inquiry with a questionnaire creates the risk of imposing findings before anything is found (Wang & Wang, 2016).

The value of LA and its impact on language learning

Another issue that most of the studies have addressed more or less is teachers' awareness of the value of learner autonomy and its impact on language learning. The value of learner autonomy has been highly recognised. Evidence can be seen from such teachers' comments as saying that learner autonomy is very important, crucial and an integral part of one's life-long learning and personal development (Chan, 2003), an important prerequisite for language learning (Balçıkanlı, 2010), and has certainly positive effects on language learning (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Salimi & Ansari, 2015; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). As seen, these expressions have mainly addressed the question "how important is learner autonomy". Yet as to the more specific issue "by what means or in what ways learner autonomy contributes to the success of language learning", not much has been reported, except for a few points from Chan (2003) and Bullock (2011). Chan (2003) presented such teachers' opinions as that autonomy helps students analyse and think critically, motivates students to take more control of their learning, and manage their learning well when away from teachers (p. 44).

Bullock (2011) added the points that self-assessment raises learners' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, and stimulates motivation and involvement in the learning process. However, such specific comments were not seen in other studies. A possible reason for this could be that the research methods that most studies adopted did not provide opportunities for the teachers to elaborate their thinking in more details, or the teachers were not fully aware of the specific ways or means yet. In any case, it suggests that teachers' thinking in this respect needs to be further explored.

Evaluating learners' autonomy and teachers' developing learners' autonomy

Several studies addressed the issue of how autonomous the teachers view their learners to be, with three explicitly raising it as a research question (Al-Shaqsi, 2009; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Chan, 2003). Also classified in this category are the several studies which evaluated learners' autonomy by checking their decision making abilities (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Camilleri, 2007; Camilleri, 1999; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). The answers to this question differed to an extent.

By getting the teachers to check and rate against a list of autonomous behaviours in the questionnaires, Chan (2003) and Al-Shaqsi (2009) concluded that the teachers were fairly positive about their students' autonomy. Yet it was noted that in Chan (2003), the interview data conveyed a strong negative attitude – controversial to findings from the survey data – but no explanation was given about the controversy. A close look at the questionnaire data revealed the largest coverage of the answers was actually "OK" with about balanced responses at both ends except for two items in relation to learning objectives and decide what to learn next. In contrast, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) directly asked the extent to which the teachers agreed with the statement that their students had a fair degree of learner autonomy, and the answers were split, with about 40% positive, 40% negative and 20% unsure.

The studies which viewed learner autonomy as learners' decision making revealed more or less different findings as to the aspects in which learner decisions were more likely to be involved. Camilleri (1999) listed items that teachers were most

likely to get students involved with as *selecting realia, classroom management, finding their own explanations to classroom task and learning procedures, and self-assessment*. Camilleri (2007) added to the list with *pace of the lesson* and Balçıkanlı (2010) with *methodology, learner training and learner strategies.* Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) further contributed to this list with *topics* and *activities*, and Shahsavari (2014) echoed the item *topics*. Concerning the aspects that teachers were least likely to get students involved, Camilleri (1999), Camilleri (2007) and Balçıkanlı (2010) revealed teachers' agreement on such items as *selecting textbooks and deciding on time and place of the lesson*, with stronger resistance expressed in Camilleri (2007) to allow students *to decide homework tasks*. However, while agreement was evidenced with some items, confliction was detected with some others. For example, s*tudents' self-assessment* was favoured in Camilleri (1999), yet identified as undesirable in Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) and Wang and Wang (2016). Another example concerned *methodology and classroom management issues,* which appeared on the "most-likely" list in Balçıkanlı (2010), yet "least feasible and desirable" in Shahsavari (2014), while not so desirable but not the worst in Wang and Wang (2016). Further, Shahsavari's (2014) overall rating of the range of autonomous activities for students as less feasible than desirable was an indication of concern about learners' capacity for autonomy. Balçıkanlı (2010) was also concerned that Turkish students were not ready to take responsibility for their own learning, yet Bullock (2010) believed learners' autonomy was not a problem in his study.

In short, these various answers show uncertainty in teachers about the autonomous learning ability of their students. It is crucial to find this out, because in any case teachers' beliefs in students' autonomy is primarily the basis on which they would endeavour to make it a practice to develop learner autonomy. Put differently, if teachers do not believe that students could be autonomous, the chances that they take any action towards that direction would be small.

While the above studies examined how teachers viewed their students' autonomy, two studies addressed the evaluation of teachers' practice in relation to developing learner autonomy. Interestingly, again, the results differed. In Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b), while teachers had split opinions about their students' autonomy, the majority of them (80%) held they gave their students opportunities

to develop learner autonomy. In contrast, Nakata's (2011) conclusion was that the teachers in the Japanese high school were not ready to promote learner autonomy. However, it is worth noting that the evidence that the two studies drew on for the conclusions were different, with responses on one questionnaire item in the former, but on a list of autonomy-oriented instructional strategies in the latter.

Strategies for greater learner autonomy

Three studies addressed the issue concerning strategies for better learner autonomy (Al Asmari, 2013; Balçıkanlı, 2010; Chan, 2003; Wang & Wang, 2016). Chan (2003) identified a range of activities that the teachers encouraged students to do both outside and inside class, the top three of which were *read newspaper in English, attend a self-study centre* and *read books or magazines in English.* Balçıkanlı (2010) showed that the student teachers named such strategies as *portfolio assessment, outside tasks,* and *journals*. In Al Asmari (2013), teaching strategy constituted one third of the questionnaire as a separate section, and the three most favoured ones were *teaching communicative skills, group discussions,* and *learner-centred approach,* while the three least favoured ones appeared *poor teaching facilities, poor learner's quality,* and *student's poor responsibility in learning.* An overview of these findings shows that some of these strategies are for students to take, as in Chan (2003), while some others are for teachers, as in the other two. Yet a close examination of these entries detects a conceptual confusion in Al Asmari (2013), which included in the category of strategies such items as teaching facilities, learners' quality.

Reported workshops facilitating teachers' practices

Concerning teachers' practices about learner autonomy, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) and Wang and Wang (2016) reported about the workshops that they ran for the teachers to share and develop autonomy-oriented approaches collaboratively. A range of activities were presented in the workshops involving talking to students about autonomy and its value, encouraging learners to engage in autonomous behaviours, getting learners to reflect on their learning, using activities in class which promote autonomy, and setting activities out of class which promote autonomy. Findings showed that the teachers were positive

towards such workshops in that they provided both practical guidance and opportunities for teachers' collaborative reflection on their own LA-oriented practices.

Observed teachers' practices

Three studies observed teachers' actual classroom practices (Feryok, 2013; Jing, 2013; Nguyen, 2014). In Feryok (2013), twelve lessons (each one to two hours) were observed over nine months, during which the teacher specified the curricular parameters through a set of routines and allowed multiple opportunities for students to take control in individual, group, and whole-class activities. Through such activities, the teacher distributed his control considerably to students, hence enhancing their autonomy. Compared with other studies, the observations in Feryok's case was profound and longitudinal, having provided some sound evidence regarding the teacher's practice of sharing control with students. It is worth noting that the teacher in this study was "reflective and articulate" (p. 223) and demonstrated much autonomy himself, and the researcher theorised his cognitions and practices. Such a situation, while ideal and insightful, might not be the case with other school teachers who may be less experienced or have less LA expertise knowledge.

Jing (2013) observed a total of six lessons of three secondary school English teachers, and presented a range of activities that students did in the class as evidence of learner-centred instruction, for example, discussing a topic in groups and reporting the results to class, role plays, peer assessment, or some students acting as teachers leading class activities. Based on such activities and the classroom atmosphere, Jing concluded that one teacher's lessons were largely learner-centred, yet those of the other two were only partially or somewhat learner-centred. However, the conclusions were not convincing in that no specific standards or principles were given regarding how each lesson was evaluated as learner-centred or teacher-centred.

Nguyen (2014) observed three lessons of each of the four participants – selected randomly from 188 survey respondents, as mentioned earlier – and followed up with stimulated recall interviews. Different from Jing, Nguyen used an

observation protocol comprising five aspects – *determining objectives; defining content and sequence of content; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the process; and evaluating and reflecting*, and concluded that little LA-orienting practice was observed. Compared with other studies, Nguyen's study, on the one hand, appeared methodologically comprehensive through the use of multi methods, especially with observations and field notes as evidence of teachers' practice; on the other hand, however, the observation protocol appeared to be rather problematic. Specifically, the aspects selected as main observation points seemed to be on quite a macro level – for example, *determining objectives* – the implementation of which seemed to be hardly seen from a few single lessons. Furthermore, these aspects, in reference to Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a, 2012b) and Barnard and Li's (2016b) findings, seemed to be those most teachers regarded as not so feasible for students' decision-making in their respective contexts, most of which were quite similar to the context in Vietnam.

Gaps between teachers' cognitions and practices

Several studies addressed the gaps between teachers' cognitions and practices about learner autonomy (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Bullock, 2011; Ding, 2013; Nakata, 2011; Wang & Wang, 2016). Nakata examined teachers' views on a range of autonomy-oriented strategies in terms of their perceived importance and teachers' actual practices, and found all of the strategies underutilized relative to their perceived importance. Based on this, Nakata concluded the teachers in study were not yet ready to promote learner autonomy. Similarly, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) and Wang and Wang (2016) examined teachers' beliefs about a range of autonomy-oriented activities in terms of their desirability and feasibility, and found teachers were more positive about the desirability of student involvement than they were about its feasibility in all cases. Ding (2013) also conveyed that the teachers could hardly implement the idea of learner autonomy into implementation due to several constraints in reality. A common voice in these studies can be roughly labelled as "OK in theory but NOT in reality". However, Bullock (2010) presented a different voice. In one case, while the teacher admitted it was indeed time-consuming to get students to self-assess, she still spent time and effort to get them to do so, because she believed self-assessment would be eventually good for students. Such a finding was not common, yet important, as it

showed a distinctively positive attitude of the teacher towards challenges in the LA implementation.

Contextual factors

Most of the studies have concerned the factors that affect teachers' cognitions and practices in relation to learner autonomy. Several studies categorised the factors as learners', teachers' and institutions' (Al Asmari, 2013; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Ding, 2013; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). Learner factors were further discussed in terms of learners' personality, motivation and learning habits (Ding, 2013; Wang & Wang, 2016), learners' sense of responsibility (Al Asmari, 2013), and misunderstanding of the value of learner autonomy and teachers' roles (Shahsavari, 2014). Teacher factors involved teachers' own learning and previous teaching experiences, conceptual understanding and practical operation skills as well as willingness and endurance for long-term investment of extra efforts demanded for effective LA development (Ding, 2013; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). Those involving institutions included not enough in-service training opportunities, rigid rules, not allowing much creativity (Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016), and poor teaching facilities (Al Asmari, 2013). Wang and Wang (2016) also point out the influence of Chinese culture with such teachers' comments as "students used to passive listening and being spoon-fed, teachers familiar with the traditional teacher-fronted approach, and administrators concerned for stability and secureness" (p. 33). Jing (2013) presented the affecting factors in terms of internal and external factors, with the former including teachers' learning and teaching experience as well as personalities and the latter referring the top-down national and local curriculum reform, teacher education projects, testing systems and school culture. As seen, the internal factors are teacher factors and the external ones embrace factors relating to institutions and the broader educational contexts such as the national curriculum reform, but the student elements were not seen in Jing (2013).

A few other studies revealed some other interesting points. Concerning teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy in self-access centres, Reinders and Lazaro (2011) reported such constraints as the integration of self-access and classroom instruction, self-access being not clearly-defined, appropriately-recognised, and

insufficiently-funded, and teachers' low motivation. Bullock (2010) and Chan (2003) mentioned the issue of curriculum coverage. A teacher in Bullock (2010) raised the question, given the limited time, whether students should be encouraged to acquire more knowledge or to develop the habits which autonomous learning required, for example, self-reflection. Similarly, in Chan's (2003) case, the dilemma was that resources and facilities were ready for students, yet students were over-loaded with other courses with little time for self-development. Also as seen, the issues of workload, facilities and resources were different as shown in most other studies where more often resources were limited, facilities poor and teachers overloaded.

In short, looking through these factors across different studies, there is a general negative tendency towards these factors, which can also be seen through the words used when discussing the factors, for example, challenges in Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and Al Asmari (2013), barriers in Thanh (2011) and constraints in Reinders and Lazaro (2011). Moreover, while the external factors (institutional or curricular) were much explored and discussed, the examination of the internal factors – that is, those relating to the teachers themselves – was limited.

Summary of the empirical studies

Now to summarise the empirical studies on teacher cognition and practice about LA, the review has disclosed several issues in the existing research. First of all, in terms of the research focus, although these studies have involved teachers' beliefs about LA in several different aspects, none (to the best of my knowledge) has taken as a specific focus the shift of control from teachers to students, which is essential for the realisation of LA in classrooms. Secondly, with respect to the research setting, the Chinese secondary school context has appeared as obviously one needing attention and exploration. Thirdly, regarding the participants, more studies have been conducted at the tertiary level with university teachers than school teachers, and none has included school administrators in the inquiry – who in effect matter much in their role of creating or shaping the environment where teachers teach and students learn. Fourthly, concerning the research methods, most of the existing studies have based their findings of teachers' LA beliefs largely on survey results, few having provided concrete observed data; and among

the few which have observed teachers' practices, fewer have explored teachers' thinking about their practice in such a way as to let teachers teach and talk first prior to any input information – either from research instruments (e.g., questionnaires) or from researchers (e.g., interviews before observations) – which carries more risk of researchers' influence on teachers' behaviours and subsequent rationalisation. Lastly, although most studies have explored the impact of various contextual factors on teachers' LA beliefs and practices, few have assembled everything (beliefs, practices, and affecting factors) together, placing them on a relatively macro theoretical framework so as to present an integrated overall picture.

These issues will be addressed, to a greater or lesser extent, in the present study.

2.4 Cultural Historical Activity Theory: A sociocultural perspective to understand the development of learner autonomy within the school context

As just said, a theoretical framework would be helpful to understand the activity (of developing LA in a school context in this case) in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Throughout this chapter, it has been mentioned from time to time (explicitly or implicitly) that the wider socio-cultural context plays a significant role in mediating students' and teachers' behaviours and thinking. On such a basis, this study proposes to take a Vygotskian perspective and adopts the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Cole & Engeström, 1993) as the conceptual framework.

A starting point to understand Vygotsky was his objection to behaviourism, claiming it as a one-sided approach to understanding human psychology which separated the organism and the environment (Kozulin, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987). In contrast, Vygotsky (1978) argued that human beings and the environment co-existed in a complex system that "co-created consciousness through human participation in activities" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 15).

Three concepts are essential in making sense of Vygotsky's key claims: mediation, internalisation, and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Mediation refers to the process of human cognitive development in participating in activities

mediated by cultural artefacts. A basic mediated action can be illustrated in a triangle as in Figure 5.

First Generation - Vygotsky
Mediating Artefacts (Tools)

Subject   Object ➡ Outcome
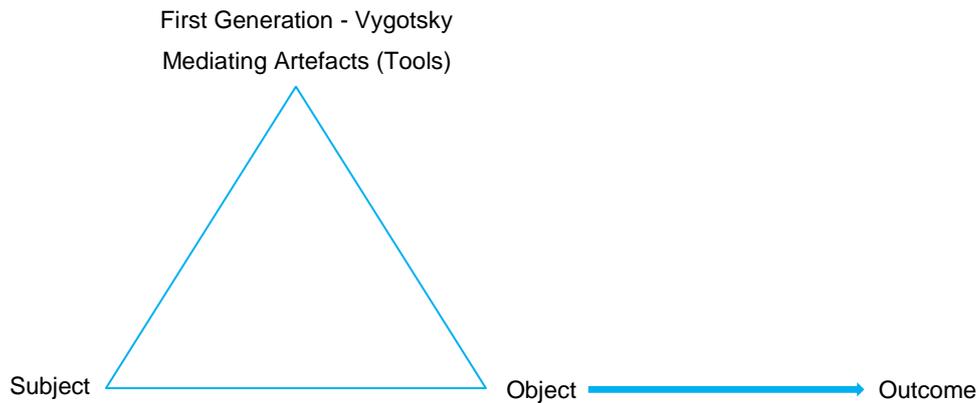
Figure 5: Vygotsky's basic mediated action triangle (individual – culture)
Source: Adapted from Cole and Engeström (1993, p. 5). Reprinted with permission.

The subject in the model refers to the individual or individuals motivated to engage in the activity, which is object-oriented (Leontiev, 1978). The object, according to its original meaning in Russian, represents the immediate goal of the activity, which lead to the intended outcome of the activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 17). The mediating artefacts include physical tools (such as knives or books) and semiotic symbols (such as signs or language). Further, all the elements involved in the activity interplay and constantly change (Barnard, 2010).

When the activity involves more than one subject, there arises the process of internalisation. According to Vygotsky, every psychological function appears twice: first *between* people on the *interpsychological* level and then *within* the individual on the *intrapsychological* level (Vygotsky 1978, p. 57, italics added). On both levels, mediating means are involved (Wertsch, 1991), and internalisation can be described as the conversion from the first level to the second, that is, from one's ability to co-appropriate mediating tools when interacting with others to that of independently doing so when acting on one's own (Leontiev, 1981).

In support of the construct of internalisation, Vygotsky (1978) introduced the notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As defined, ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable

peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Put simply, ZPD is the gap between one's ability to work or solve problems with assistance from more able others and that of acting independently. Importantly, productive interactions should orient instruction toward the ZPD, as "the only good learning is that which is in advance of development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89).

Through these concepts, Vygotsky recognised the relationship between individuals' mental development and their interaction with the cultural and historical settings. Engeström (1987) illustrates the relation in an expanded model of Vygotsky's (1978) original one, and presents it as a human activity system.
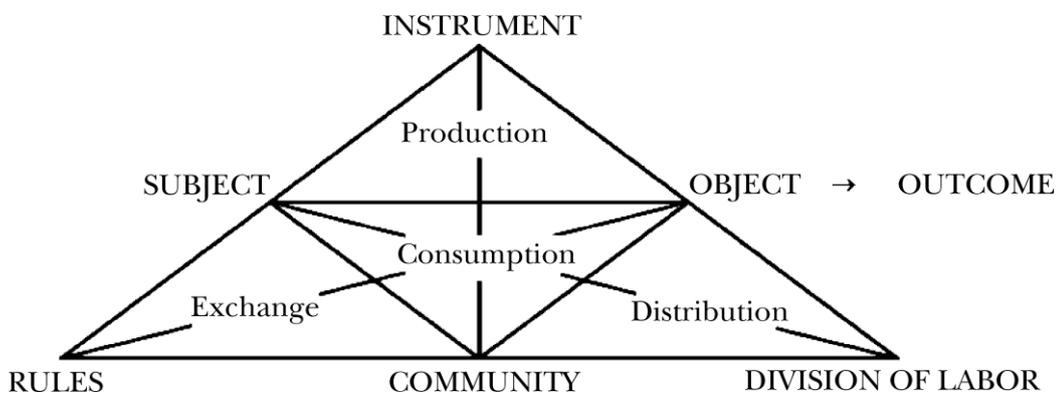
Figure 6: The structure of human activity
Source: Engeström (2015, p. 63). Reprinted with permission.

A clear distinction of Engeström's model from Vygotsky's original one is that it shows that an individual's cognition is shaped in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), in which the individual and others (multiple subjects) mutually engage in a joint enterprise (a shared object), using a shared repertoire of common physical and symbolic artefacts; roles and responsibilities are distributed among community members (division of labour); and rules are employed to regulate the activity (Barnard, 2010; Cross, 2010; Engeström, 1987, 1993).

Rogoff (1995) provides a three-plane analysis termed as participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship, which respectively concern individual personal activities, interpersonal collaborative activities, and community/institution-based collective global activities. Viewed differently, these three planes can be transferred to an analysis of one activity, examining its affecting factors from three perspectives: personal, interpersonal, and

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social/historic/cultural. Barnard (2010) suggests a similar analytical framework in terms of micro-, meso-, and macro-levels (p. 5).

In the field of language teacher cognition research, Borg (2006) identifies the methodological issue of lacking a broad conceptual framework "that brings together the disparate threads of research that comprise and define the current state of the art" (Cross, 2010, p. 437). In response, Cross (2010) proposes his view of teaching as sociocultural activity, and argues for a Vygotskian perspective, termed as Cultural Historical Activity Theory by some post-Vygotskian scholars (Cole & Engeström, 1993). His argument is based on the following considerations. First, the theory relates teachers' thoughts to their practices, and the contexts within which the interaction between thinking and practice takes place. Second, the theory perceives cognition as "being neither static nor fixed, but malleable and subject to change and further development across time and experience". Third, the theory addresses "the tensions and contradictions that arise within cognition". Fourth, the theory matches with current empirical qualitative research method (pp. 437-438). Furthermore, Barnard (2010) argues the CHAT framework be applied to a community of practice, in that it allows the practice to be viewed "as a unified activity system in which the constituent elements are interconnected at all levels"; and that it facilitates analysing the individual and collective transformations "between and across levels within an activity system" (p. 5).

Section 2.3 has concluded that few studies have examined teachers' cognition through a macro theoretical framework; and particularly no previous studies have connected teachers' cognition about LA to CHAT. Given the major principles of this theory and the nature of teacher cognition, it is proposed that CHAT would be a suitable framework for the present study because it systematically explores various factors that facilitate or hinder teachers' thinking and doing in relation to the development of LA in a certain context. LA can only be really understood in terms of the institutional context in which it is (intended to be) promoted. CHAT allows this context to be examined in the light of the interconnections between the components of the activity system – as illustrated in Chapter 6.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the two key concepts involved in the present study – learner autonomy and teacher cognition – as well as the empirical studies examining teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to the development of LA. The review has shown, as summarised in Section 2.3, research gaps exist in study of beliefs and practices about LA development in the Chinese secondary school context, particularly concerning the shift of control between different school managers, teachers, and students. Focusing on these gaps, the present study proposes to address the following questions:

1) *How was learner autonomy interpreted in a Chinese secondary school?*
2) *In what ways was learner autonomy developed through control shifts in the school?*
3) *In what ways did the administrators' and the teachers' beliefs converge with or diverge from their practices?*
4) *How should the convergences and divergences be explained in the wider sociocultural context?*

These questions provide the basis for and will guide the design and conduct of data collection and analysis, which is to be dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Chapter Two has reviewed the selected literature on both theoretical understanding and empirical inquiry in relation to the concepts of learner autonomy (LA) and teacher cognition, based on which research spaces for this study have been identified, and research questions defined. In this chapter, I will discuss how the questions were addressed and investigated, that is, the methodology that was undertaken. Its purpose is to provide an understanding of the process of scientific inquiry rather than the products, and therefore the paradigms, styles, and approaches to research need to be described (Kaplan, 1973). The chapter is organised in seven sections: 3.1 presents the methodological framework; 3.2 provides information about the research setting and participants; 3.3 addresses the ethical issues; 3.4 describes in detail the methods and instruments deployed for data collection, and 3.5 the process of data analysis; 3.6 discusses the quality evaluation of this study; and 3.7 summarises the chapter.

3.1 Methodological framework

The present project is a case study of teacher cognition and practice which follows the naturalistic interpretive paradigm and adopts qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis. In the following sub-sections, I will define these methodological terms and justify their use for this study.

3.1.1 Ontology, epistemology, methodology

Ontology means the worldviews and assumptions in which the researcher operates in their search for new knowledge (Schwandt, 2007, p. 190), and it addresses the issue 'what is the nature of reality?' (Creswell, 2007). Epistemology is the process of thinking (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and it raises, among others, the question 'what is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?' (Creswell, 2007). Methodology, however, is the process of how we seek our new knowledge (Schwandt, 2007, p. 190) and asks 'what is the process of research?' (Creswell, 2007). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest that ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to

methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to the choice of instrumentation and data collection (p. 21). Methodology, therefore, involves not merely a technical level of data collection and/or analysis methods, but also the underpinning epistemological assumptions which are determined by the ontological philosophy. Hence, designing a research project requires defining the research paradigms, the type of research and methods and techniques employed for data collection, as well as analysis.

3.1.2 Interpretivist paradigm

Positivism and interpretivism are 'the two overarching perspectives that shape our understanding of research' (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 3), and they contrast ontologically, epistemologically as well as methodologically. In terms of ontology, the positivist researcher is a realist believing in a single identifiable reality or truth which can be measured and studied (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The interpretivist, however, views himself as a relativist, believing in multiple realities which are mentally constructed, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them (Guba, 1990, p. 27). In terms of epistemology, positivists see no interaction between the researcher and what is being studied and believe in objectivity as the primary aim in research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005); while interpretivists hold that the inquirer and what is enquired into are fused into a single entity interacting to construct and co-construct findings, and therefore subjectivity is unavoidable (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 195). Consequently, positivists adopt experimental or correlational methods and believe in the replicability of research (Merriam, 1991) based on statistical probability; while interpretive approaches rely heavily on naturalistic methods ensuring an adequate dialogue between the researcher and the researched to co-construct a meaningful reality (Angen, 2000) from which findings cannot be generalised, but may be relatable – in the judgement of the reader – to other contexts.

The differences between the two traditions are illustrated in Table 2 (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37):

Table 2: Contrasting positivist and naturalist axioms

Axioms about	Positivist Paradigm	Naturalistic Paradigm
The nature of reality	Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable	Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic
The relationship of the knower to the known	Knower and known are independent, a dualism	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable
The possibility of generalization	Time- and context-free generalization (monothetic statements) are possible	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (ideographic statements) are possible
The possibility of causal linkages	There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects
The role of values	Inquiry is value-free	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects

Source: Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 37). Reprinted with permission.

The present study intends to inquire into the beliefs and practices of school managers and teachers when coping with a curriculum innovation regarding LA. Its purpose is to gain a better understanding of the implementation of LA, rather than to find out any 'objective' truth. Thus it falls into the interpretive paradigm of research that views social reality as the humanly-created product of individual and collective consciousness and cognition, and knowledge as personal, subjective and unique; therefore the seeking of knowledge is primarily an understanding of the way in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The interpretivist holds that events and behaviours in the social world are situated activities, which evolve over time and are richly affected by context, and therefore, should be examined in their natural state, through the eyes of participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). People's practices and actions are guided by their own unique and particular beliefs, which are developed in, and affected by, a fluid and ever-changing social context. Hence, in order to understand and interpret the complexity of their

practice and the underlying cognition, it is preferable to observe them in their natural setting, and co-construct with them the meanings underlying their actions.

3.1.3 Case study

While Stake (1995) views a case study as study of 'the particular', aiming for uniqueness, particularity and diversity (p. 238), Adelman, Kemmis and Jenkins (1980) describe it as an instance in action. Yin (2009), however, emphasizes the contextual nature of the case which provides a unique example of real people in real situations (pp. 72-73). Creswell defines it as 'a single entity or phenomenon' in a bounded system (1994), and adds that it is an in-depth exploration of an activity, event, process, or individual (1998). By bounded, he means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries; and the case, then, may be a single individual, several individuals separately or in a group, a programme, events, or activities.

Case study has a particular strength to observe effects in real contexts with recognition of the power of context in determining cause and effect relationships (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) in the specific context under investigation, and it is particularly valuable when the researcher has, or wishes to have, little control over events (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 322). Further, Robson (2002) draws our attention to the fact that an extreme and unique case can provide a valuable 'test bed' (p. 182). By extreme, he means the situation in which 'if it can work here, it will work anywhere else', or choosing an ideal set of circumstances to try out a new approach or project to gain fuller insight into how it operates before taking it to a wider audience.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) stress the holistic nature of case study, saying that the whole is more than the sum of its parts (p. 78). In order to present a comprehensive view of a case, 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) is essential, that is, a rich and vivid description of relevant events (Robson, 2002). Such a description allows the events and situations to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007), or at least allows the reader to pass judgement on the researcher's subsequent inferences and interpretations (Geertz, 1973). To achieve such thick and rich

description, a multi-method approach should be adopted to collect extensive data of many types (Creswell, 1998). Another issue to be considered in conducting a case study is the appropriate balance between the number of the cases, where there is the situation of a group of cases, and the depth in each case, because for each case examined, the researcher has less time to devote to exploring the depths of any one case (Merriam, 1988).

The case in the current study was bounded temporally (in 2012), geographically (in a local school in a fairly developed city in northern China), and by some special contextual features such as its private nature, which allowed relatively more curricular freedom than state-run schools. The school was promoting a programme aiming to develop LA through collaborative group learning, and the English Department of nine teachers comprised the major 'sub-units' of study (Yin, 2009), the small number allowing an in-depth exploration into each sub-unit. Each participant stood alone as a single case, situated in, and affected by, colleagues and the larger social context, involving a chain of hierarchy, with government policy at the apex, institutional management in the middle, and teachers and students at the bottom. The study of this case strove to portray the participants' lived experience of, thoughts about and feelings on, the particular programme (developing LA) being promoted and implemented. Further, this school was, to some extent, regarded as an extreme and unique case which could provide a valuable 'test bed' (Robson, 2002, p. 182) in respect of the educational background and vision of the chief principal, an expertise director of the programme, the rich experience of the teachers, the high socio-economic status of parents, and the much smaller class size in this school than in average public schools (see more detail in Section 3.2.1). It may imply that if there is a gap between the intended curriculum and the one realised in this particular setting, the gap is likely to be larger in other contexts where conditions are less favourable to innovation.

3.1.4 Qualitative approach to data collection and analysis

Guided by contrasting philosophical paradigms, positivist and naturalist researchers tend to adopt different approaches for data collection. Quantitative approaches, concerned with the collection and analysis of data in numeric form,

are often favoured by positivist tradition followers, while interpretivists tend primarily to collect and analyse qualitative data, i.e. information in many forms and chiefly non-numeric (Creswell, 2005), although mixed methods (i.e. combining qualitative and quantitative data) are also commonly used. Qualitative research focuses on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances which are seen as being interesting or illuminating the specific context, and aims to achieve `depth' rather than `breadth' (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 1996, p. 61) of interpretation. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify the merits of a qualitative approach thus: it enables a research project to 1) identify contextual factors and explore complexity; 2) provide detailed insider description of dynamic processes; 3) gather rich and in-depth data; 4) compare and contrast data from different sources in the process of grounded analysis and 5) explore possible causes of the phenomenon and thus generate a grounded theory.

With such values as those presented above, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate for this study in terms of data collection and analysis. It suited the research purpose of the study to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex nature of school managers' and teachers' cognition and practice with particular regard to developing student autonomy in a unique and dynamic context.

Next, I will move on to talk about the research setting and participants.

3.2 Setting and participants

This research was based in a Chinese private secondary school which was promoting learner autonomy as a key curricular goal. The participants comprised the school principal, the executive director, and all nine teachers of the English Department. I will now move on to provide more details.

3.2.1 The school and the principal

The selected case 'Zia' (pseudonym) was a private boarding school located in a relatively developed province in the north of China, encompassing Years 1 to 5 (primary) and 6 to 9 (secondary) as prescribed in the local educational system. It was established in 2009, starting on a fairly small scale (in the Chinese context) with 96 students, but then grew rapidly. The number of students reached over 900

and that of the classes increased from four to twenty-eight by August 2012, when the data collection for this study was conducted. Given the focus of this study, only the secondary section (i.e., Years 6 to 9) is further described here, and is hereafter referred to as a secondary school. This school was distinguished from other local secondary schools in the following features:

1) It was private, and students paid high tuition fees to study here while normal public schools were tuition-free;
2) The socio-economic status of the parents who could afford to send their children to this school was relatively high, and so were their expectations of the school;
3) By boarding, students in this school spent five days and nights at school and two at home, which meant students had a great deal more time to be with each other and their teachers than those in normal public schools;
4) The class size in this school was restricted to no more than 36 students in each class, while that in normal public schools reached 50 or more;
5) The private enterprise nature of this school did not demand of employees the Teacher's Certificate, a qualification mandatory for public school teachers in addition to the academic degrees, though it did set higher expectations regarding teachers' practical strengths and creativity in teaching and student management.
6) The school attracted much attention after its establishment and was considered a highly favourable choice by many students and parents.

The principal was the founder of the school and the major contributor to the school's rapidly increasing influence. Described as an individual with real expertise in education, he was well-recognised across China and labelled as 'Legendary Principal Wen' (a pseudonym, as are all names hereafter) by some media. His distinctiveness first derived from the education qualifications he had achieved internationally in the field of education management (BA in China and two MAs and a PhD in the US) and his rich international working experience. He had also put his theoretical perspective into practice, which was evident in two other schools he opened and ran successfully: one in 2002 under the name of the largest education group in China, and the other in 2006 in his own name. Many parents sent their children to this school in the belief that the right person would do the right things.

3.2.2 The executive director and his innovation project

Due to the fact that the principal travelled frequently to supervise the other schools under his management, a general director was appointed at Zia. His earlier title had been executive principal, indicating a position under only the principal but above all the teaching staff. When I entered Zia to start the data collection in August 2012, it happened that a newly-employed executive director (ED), named Cheng, was taking over the previous executive principal's position. Cheng was said to be 'specifically sought and found' by the chief principal, being identified as a pioneer in leading the national curriculum reform, and with a particular focus on developing students' holistic abilities. Before joining Zia, Cheng was the deputy principal of another private secondary school in the south of China, dedicated to enhancing learning efficiency through autonomous and collaborative learning. Invited as an expert, he had chaired the innovation in several other schools apart from the one he worked for, and gradually developed his reputation as an innovation doer, rather than just a talker. Employed with a good salary, in the principal's words, his task was to carry out his innovation at Zia, which was to construct a school-wide autonomy-collaboration-and-efficiency-oriented instruction model, which he termed as *ACE Class Model* (*Autonomous, Collaborative, Efficient*).

To promote the ACE Class Model, Cheng took a series of measures to train teachers, including pre-school workshops and peer observation, evaluation and feedback giving. Cheng's joining Zia and leading the ACE innovation project was an unanticipated event to me, which altered the research setting considerably and placed me in a delicate position. As a result, I had to tweak my original research plan accordingly to accommodate the changes I encountered in the field. Further details regarding the changes will be provided in Section 3.4.

3.2.3 The English department and routines of the English teachers

The English Department of the secondary school consisted of nine teachers, who undertook the English teaching of all eighteen classes in the school, normally two classes per teacher. Students' school hours were structured in 40-minute periods, and the number of periods that students in different years had ranged from ten to

twelve periods per day, with seven for subject lessons and the rest for self-study and/or extracurricular activities. An English teacher's responsibilities included classroom teaching, supervising students' self-study, peer lesson observing and giving feedback, as well as lesson planning and marking. The number of scheduled periods for each teacher was well in excess of twenty periods per week, excluding time needed for individual lesson planning, marking, tutoring, meeting parents, and so forth.

3.2.4 The teacher participants

A total of thirteen teachers at Zia expressed interest in participating in this research: nine English teachers, two teaching Chinese, and two teaching moral education. With learner autonomy in EFL education the primary interest of this study, the nine English teachers were selected as participants, and the others reserved as backup; eventually, it was realised that data from these other teachers would not be necessary. Now I will move on to give a detailed account of how I accessed and recruited the participants.

I had known the chief principal since 2009 when the school was established and I sent my son to study in this school. When I contacted him in 2011 to inquire about the possibility of conducting research there, he showed considerable interest and provided strong support. Specifically, he not only agreed to an interview I wanted to do with him, but also arranged for Feng – the executive principal of the time – to provide help and support with specific issues regarding the research. On my subsequent request, Feng introduced me at the beginning-of-year staff meeting in February 2012, which provided me the opportunity to meet and talk to all teachers about my research.

Several teachers responded shortly after the meeting. One of them was the head of the English Department – named Naa, also referred to as Teacher 1 (T1) – who was also my son's form teacher (*ban zhu ren* in Chinese) and had a good personal relationship with me. Naa assisted me a great deal in recruiting other teacher participants. Viewing collective participation in the research as a good professional development opportunity for the department, she expressed her keen wish that everyone participate. Though that sounded beneficial for me, I was fully

aware of the essentiality of voluntary participation. To avoid participation due to the obligations of particular power relationships, I explained to Naa and requested an opportunity to meet the English teachers in person and to give out the information letters and consent forms. She willingly agreed and then invited me to the beginning-of-semester department meeting in September 2012. At the meeting, she introduced me as an ever-supportive parent, an English colleague and a trustworthy friend. She encouraged participation in the research, and stated explicitly the voluntary nature of participation, a point I reemphasized when handing out the information letters and consent forms. My original intention was to give everyone a week to consider whether they wished to participate or not. However, all nine teachers, including Naa herself, read the information letter and signed the consent forms without hesitation (see Appendices 1 & 2), exceeding my expectations.

In order to understand the teachers' cognition and practice then, it was important to have relevant knowledge of their previous experience. To probe that, I invited them at the beginning of the interviews to relate their professional stories as teachers. The rationale for such an approach was to glean more comprehensive personal information than one might through a simple form or questionnaire. Table 3 outlines the teacher participants' profiles, and a detailed account can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 3: Participants' profiles

T	G	Job titles	Qualifi-cations	Ys	Previous working experience	Start at Zia
T1	F	English T & Head of Department (Years 6-9)	BA 2006	6	English teacher in a tertiary college (2006-2012)	2009
T2	F	English T & English Programme Manager (Years 1-9)	BA 2001	11	English teacher in a tertiary college (2001-2004) English teacher in another high school run by the principal of Zia (2004-2011)	2011
T3	F	English T & Year 6 Dean	BA 2005	7	After-school English tutor in a private tutoring institution (2005-012)	2012
T4	F	English T & Form T	BA 2002	9	Bookstore assistant (2002-2003) High school English teacher (2003-2011)	2011
T5	F	English T	BA 2007	5	Secondary school English teacher (2007-2009)	2010
T6	F	English T & Form T	BA 2000	12	University English teacher (2000-2007) English teacher and vice director at a private tertiary institution (2007-2011)	2011
T7	M	English T & Form T	Two-year Diploma 1992	20	High school English teacher (1992-2002) Secondary school English teacher (2002-2012)	2012
T8	M	English T & International Affairs Manager	BA 2007	5	English teacher, course adviser, and administrator in a private institution of international study (2007-2012)	2009
T9	F	English T & Form T	BA 2006	6	Secondary school English teacher (2006-2012)	2012

[Notes: G = Gender; Ys = Years of teaching]

Next, I will move on to address the key ethical issues in this study.

3.3 Ethical issues

3.3.1 Ethical considerations regarding data collection

This research was conducted strictly according to Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (2008) of the University of Waikato. Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was obtained, and the Letter of Ethical Approval is attached (Appendix 4).

3.3.2 Position of the researcher

My previous identity before starting the PhD programme was as an English lecturer in a Chinese university, and before that I had been a secondary school teacher like my participants. The years of language teaching at different levels had provided me with an insider (-emic) understanding of the complex context of the research. However, being a PhD candidate in an overseas university for the current study enabled me to maintain an outsider (-etic) perspective in the research setting. In addition, my personal interest in developing learner autonomy gave rise to my desire to find out what other practitioners think and do. For these reasons, I endeavoured to retain an impartial standpoint in my data collection, analysis and interpretation.

However, I did acknowledge that researcher bias is unavoidable, and I was sharply aware not only of the cultural baggage I carried with me, but also of the perceptions of my role that might be held by my participants. For example, to the participants in the research setting, my identity as a university teacher might lead them to position me as an expert or judge. Further, I might be suspected as 'a customer inspector', due to the fact that I was a parent who paid tuition fees and expected quality education for my son. Being aware of such issues, right from the beginning, I made clear my identity as a novice researcher who used to be an insider teacher but had become keen to switch my role to that of an outsider learner. In addition, I shook off the 'customer inspectorship' label by letting the teachers know that I would soon send my son to study overseas, and I therefore would make no attempt to evaluate or inspect the teachers' performance.

In the next section, I will present in detail the data collection procedures and the instruments employed.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Data collection procedures in situ

As mentioned in Section 3.2.2, the research setting was altered to some extent due to Cheng's joining Zia and leading the ACE innovation program there. As a result, the original data collection procedures did not fit as well as planned, and

adjustments were made. Specifically, it was originally intended to survey all the teachers in the school to elicit their perceptions of LA and to use the data in the subsequent professional development workshops prior to collecting substantial data. However, the changed circumstances meant that while the survey and workshops did take place (see Appendix 5), the data thus collected proved to be of little use and are not discussed further in this thesis. Consequently, two complementary sets of data were collected for this study, with the major set focusing on teachers and the other on the school management. While only interviews were conducted with the principal (Wen) and the executive director (Cheng), the teacher data was gathered more comprehensively in the following sequence: lesson observations and post-lesson discussions, and follow-up interviews. In addition, a research journal was kept, thus the whole process of data collection was tracked. The next section is the detailed report of the data collection procedures.

3.4.2 Observations

It is widely held that observation provides direct evidence of behaviours and allows large amounts of descriptive data to be collected (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Richards, 2003; Silverman, 2001). In 2003 Borg recognises observation as an increasingly common strategy in the study of language teacher cognition, claiming that the concrete evidence of what teachers do in the classroom is a significant reference to what they think, know and believe, and without that evidence, language teacher cognition cannot be usefully studied. Given the purpose of this study to explore the convergences and divergences between teachers' beliefs and practice in developing LA, observation was the appropriate method for collecting first-hand lively classroom data. In addition, observation in this study provided an empirical basis of the subsequent post-lesson discussions, which took the form of stimulated recall interviews (Borg, 2006).

However, when applying observation as a data collection method, researchers must be aware of its complex nature, and plan and implement it with high levels of skill and sensitivity (Borg, 2006). Scholars have discussed methodological issues involved in observation from various perspectives (e.g., Burgess, 1984;

Cohen et al., 2000; Patton, 1990), and Borg (2006) summarises nine dimensions in terms of: participation, awareness, authenticity, disclosure, scope, recording, structure, coding, and analysis. Using those dimensions, Borg discusses issues such as how natural the research settings are, the extent to which the researcher participates in the settings under study, and the observed are fully informed about the observation and its focus, the extent to which the observation is pre-designed (and subsequently re-shaped), and how the data are recorded, coded and analysed.

Being aware of the above methodological issues, I piloted class observations and post-lesson discussions with one of my supervisors, an ESOL teacher in a New Zealand institution, and a Chinese graduate student teaching Chinese. I also watched published videoed lessons and the post-lesson discussions. The pilot studies substantially enhanced my awareness of what was involved in preparing to observe a lesson; for example, obtaining pre-knowledge about the classroom layout, requesting in advance when possible for materials to be used in class, choosing an appropriate place to sit and place the camera, and so forth. I also decided to use blank sheets for field notes in order to minimise the restriction from any pre-determined structure, but expanded the notes as soon and in as much detailed manner as possible (see a sample of field notes at Appendix 6).

In the actual study, a total number of 22 lesson observations were conducted with nine English teachers from September to December 2012. The next subsection is a detailed account as well as a discussion of the relevant methodological issues.

The observation setting

As mentioned earlier, the ED was implementing his ACE innovation project (see Section 3.2.2), of which open class observation was a major and complex part. It then turned out that a number of observations were already taking place even if I did not come to observe. To distinguish my own schedule of observations from the 'open' ones, I must first present a clear picture of what was taking place in the school at that time.

The open class observations were carried out in three rounds throughout the entire semester. The first two rounds required participation by all teachers, in each of which everyone gave at least one open lesson, and all departmental colleagues

(and sometimes the ED as well) observed the lesson and discussed it together afterwards. The difference between the two rounds was that the first one was more of a practice nature; while the second was somewhat an intra-department competition, in which teachers' performances were formally appraised by their peer colleagues. A third round required partial participation, and was in effect a serious school-wide teaching competition across departments. In this last round, two teachers were selected from each department as representatives to give showcase lessons, which were marked and ranked, and then awarded differently according to the performances.

The open class observation started almost immediately after the new semester began – to be exact, from Week 2 – and continued till nearly the very end of the semester late in December. For the open lessons, the teachers used standard textbooks and taught their usual classes, and followed the regular teaching schedule (i.e., they taught whichever topic, unit or section was next on the schedule, rather than a particularly selected one). It was compulsory that teachers observe and discuss together all the open lessons taught by their departmental colleagues, for which a fixed schedule was set up for each department for open lessons only. Thursday afternoon was the time for the English Department, when all the English teachers were free from their own normal teaching, either observing open lessons given by their colleagues or themselves being observed conducting classes.

While the observations were compulsory for teachers of the same subject, they were also optionally open to teachers of other subjects, year group deans, Heads of Department (HoDs) and management staff like the ED. These people did come to observe as well, because there was a requirement regarding the number of open lessons they should observe per month, and the number varied according to their job titles and duties. For example, a teacher without any special title needed to observe at least ten open lessons per month, but for deans or HoDs, the number went up to twenty. In addition, the school had followed an 'open door policy' since it was established, which meant that any lesson was open any time to anyone (e.g., colleagues, school administrators, parents, and so forth). As a result of the ED's open-lesson strategy, it became a matter of fact that observers were acceptable in any class, and several teachers turning up in one class to observe an

open lesson was a frequent occurrence throughout the semester.

The observed lessons

As described above, open classes and observations became a normalised practice at Zia when I was there to observe lessons for the purpose of my research. My original plan with observations was, if the teachers agreed to my request, to observe a unit of successive standard lessons, and to conduct the observations teacher by teacher. However, I then realised that the school schedule of open lessons might have been quite demanding and stressful for the teachers. Consequently, I hesitated to request to observe any extra lessons for my research purposes. Also as Borg (2006) advises, I was more than willing to adjust my observation plans so as to minimise the inconvenience or anxiety imposed on the teachers. Furthermore, the open lessons were very tightly scheduled. Taking all those circumstances into account, I decided to primarily follow the school open lesson schedule and to complement it with additional usual classes (i.e., non-open lessons) that some teachers voluntarily invited me to observe. As a result, a total of twenty-two lessons were observed: twenty open and two normal (see detailed observation outcomes in Appendix 7)

With respect to my presence in the class, the observed teachers knew clearly I was among the observers but with a different identity and different agenda. To clarify, while the school staff were there as insiders with the purpose of peer-learning, making comments, providing feedback and assessing or evaluating, I was there as an outsider observing for research purposes. I emphasised that the ED's project and my research were entirely coincidental, and I was neither a co-worker helping the teachers align with the ED's direction, nor an inspector to see if they were doing as the ED directed. Regarding how much the participants know about the research purpose, Borg (2006) comments that disclosure is a matter of degree. What the participants knew in this case was that they could do as they wished, following the ED's guidelines to the extent they wished, and I was there to observe what they were doing, endeavouring to understand why.

Overall this research was conducted in a considerably authentic setting, in that open lessons were a normal feature of the school, and lessons were taught by

teachers in their usual classrooms to their usual students using materials which were part of the curriculum they normally followed (Borg, 2006, p. 235). However, as Borg also points out, the concept 'natural occurring' merits critical attention, and the reported natural behaviour in classroom events could be 'anything but natural'. Gabrielatos (2004) echoes that once observed, the lesson is no longer normal. In effect, the very presence of the observer affects the behaviour of the observed (Labov, 1972, p. 209), and this is even more so when a considerable number of colleagues observe an open lesson. Thus, I would define the 22 lessons I observed all as showcases, because 20 of them were school scheduled open lessons and the other two were observed on invitation, that is, the teachers invited their colleagues and me to 'see another one' when they felt the observed ones were not complete or good enough.

The ED encouraged all open lessons to be video-recorded for the purpose of reflection and modification, and the HoDs were supposed to have responsibility for arranging or co-ordinating the recordings. However, the results in this regard did not turn out very positively, due to shortage of both technology staff and the school–owned video cameras. In that case, my request to video record the open lessons turned out to be a win-win action and was therefore accepted with no problem, and indeed, was positively welcomed.

Concerning positions for the camera and myself, my decisions varied according to classroom situations. In most of open lessons, the classrooms were crowded with students and observer teachers, with students moving around for groupwork or presenting in front of a blackboard (two in each room on the front and back walls). Most of the observing teachers sat at the back or the sides of the classroom, showing no intention to interact with students; but some teachers chose to sit in a group by some students, keeping a close eye on what the students were doing, and occasionally talking to them during the group discussion sessions. The camera was on a tripod and in most cases placed in a corner of the classroom, able to capture most of the teacher's actions. The rationale for this positioning of the camera was to minimise any disturbance or inconvenience it might cause to the observed teacher, the students and other observer teachers. However, in those instances where teachers expressed their wish to see students' activities, the camera was placed in the front or at the side of the classroom, focusing more on a

certain group. While keeping an eye on the camera, I tried to take as detailed field notes as I was able.

On a few occasions when it was convenient to observe students more closely, I did so. There were also a couple of times during the group discussion sessions when students turned to me, as they did with other observer teachers, seeking help with some English expressions. Under those circumstances, I responded with a quick answer as most other observer teachers did. I considered those on-site (re)actions appropriate and sensible, because in that way I naturalised myself to the setting as one of the usual observers, rather than distinguishing myself as a special one.

Also, with the teachers' permission, I collected and photocopied some examples of students' work, which were either done in class or completed as homework after class. Other collected artefacts included the teachers' lesson plans (in the form of PowerPoint slides and/or the school-promoted Learning Guide) (see Appendix 8), book materials, and ACE class Teacher Evaluation Standards (see Appendix 9). These artefacts will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

After each lesson, I watched the video and transcribed key episodes manually, and noted down questions to be used for post-lesson discussions. The field notes were subsequently amplified by more detailed reflective notes and entered into a word document.

3.4.3 Post-lesson discussions and open discussions

While observation presents teachers' behaviours and allows for inferences about their thinking, it is insufficient for exploring these internal cognitive processes in more depth and verifying the inferences made (Borg, 2006, p. 231). For this reason, verbal commentaries – 'getting teachers to talk about their beliefs, thoughts and similar mental constructs' (Borg, 2006, p. 189) – are needed, so as to provide opportunities for teachers to articulate their practical theories and make the implicit explicit (Clark & Peterson, 1986). In this study, post-lesson discussions and semi-structured interviews were employed to explore the teachers' cognitive processes and rationales behind the classroom behaviours.

The post-lesson discussions were composed of two parts: one open group discussion which all teachers in the department attended, and the other, an individual discussion with me.

The open group discussion was part of the ED's open-lesson scheme, scheduled immediately after the open lesson observations, held in the school meeting room, and chaired by the English HoD. During the session, the teachers took turns to talk. It was usually conducted lesson by lesson, starting with the observed teacher's self-reflection and followed by comments and feedback from the observers. Approximately five minutes were allowed for the teacher's self-reflection. After that the other teachers took turns to make comments and give feedback to the observed teacher. It was suggested that each observer teacher limit their comments to two minutes, and the observed teacher should try not to interrupt before all the observers had finished speaking. The process was repeated until all the lessons observed on the day were discussed. After that, opportunities were given to the observed teachers to make additional comments. Lastly, the HoD briefly wrapped up and concluded the session. Each session lasted about an hour or so. The time allocation for everyone was just a suggestion, and the teachers did not follow it rigidly; some were quite garrulous while others were quite brief, and from time to time teachers broke in with further comments or questions, which made the discussion more dialogic and interactive.

This open discussion was completely a school activity mainly for the purpose of teachers' professional development in relation to promoting the ACE Class Model. However, it appeared to be a loose form of focus group discussion and a good opportunity to obtain some rich data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) define a focus group as a form of group interview in which the group members interact with each other rather than the researcher, discussing a topic supplied by the researcher and generating collective rather than individual views. Although the topic was not supplied by me, it was the topic under study. The merits of this session lie in that it was a normal occurrence and that it was completely run by the participants, therefore the researcher's influence was minimised. The interactive nature of focus groups (Cohen et al., 2011) and their informality help to generate a diverse range of viewpoints and allow initial data to emerge (Gladman & Freeman, 2012). However, consideration must be given to the limitations in using

this session as research data; for example, given the limited time, the size of the group was obviously too big, and therefore the data generated from each participant was unavoidably rather thin. Furthermore, power and/or personal relationships among the group members might also have hindered some teachers from expressing their views fully and honestly. In addition, the discussion might have deviated from the research focus as what was included in a lesson was far too broad and the discussion could be on any aspect of the lesson.

The session was audio-recorded, summarised, and then sent to the teachers for correction, addition, deletion and validation (see Appendix 10 for a sample summary). As the school also required the group to summarise the discussion and upload it to the school website, the summary I sent to them turned out to be a nearly-ready-to-go document which otherwise they would have had to write up themselves.

After the open discussion, I made appointments with the observed teachers to have an individual post-lesson discussion with me. Most of the post-lesson discussions were not able to be conducted until the following week. Here arose the issue of time lapse between the activity and the discussion. According to Gass and Mackey (2000), the greater the delay, the greater the potential for memory decay. However, the reality was that, to prepare for the discussion, I needed time to watch the video to identify key episodes; and the open lessons always happened on Thursday afternoon and school finished early on Friday, which left little chance for teachers' availability within the week. Borg (2006) advises that while in theory the gap between the event and the recall should be kept short, the researcher needs to accommodate the participants' schedules. However, there might be risks relating to post-hoc rationalisation, which should be taken into consideration in the data analysis.

While a total of 22 lessons were observed, separate one-on-one post-lesson discussions were carried out in sixteen sessions due to practical conditions such as the teachers' schedules or availability. Nevertheless, all the observed lessons were discussed, and on some occasions two lessons were discussed together in one session (see the detailed post-lesson discussion schedule in Appendix 11).

Each post-lesson discussion lasted at least 30 minutes and some went on for more than an hour. The session was held either in the teacher's office or in a small school meeting room, and the stimuli used to facilitate the discussions comprised the manual transcripts of the observed lesson, the PowerPoint Slides and /or the Learning Guide used in the lesson, and the textbooks. Regarding the recorded video, while some teachers requested a copy for their own use, none of them was willing to watch it together with me and discuss it. There were two main reasons: feeling awkward to watch oneself with others, and time pressure. Consequently, in each session, I firstly invited the teacher to identify and reflect on actions he or she took with some extent of consideration for LA. Then I described to him or her episodes which I viewed as potentially LA-oriented and asked about the rationale behind them. Where appropriate, I further elicited his or her thinking at the time of the discussion. This session was audio-recorded and I provided participants with a summary of the discussion afterwards for them to check its accuracy and to add any other details.

It is worth pointing out that the post-lesson discussions I had with each teacher individually all happened after the school-scheduled open group discussions. As a result, evidence revealed that some teachers were more or less influenced by comments or feedback, either positive or negative, previously given by their colleagues.

3.4.4 Interviews

As noted in the previous section, the other instrument used in this study to elicit teachers' cognition was the semi-structured interview, which was also applied in the case of the school management to glean the administrators' perspectives on LA. Following on from the last two sections focusing on teachers, I will now continue with interviews with the teachers before shifting to those of the managers.

Interviews with the teacher participants

While the post-lesson discussions focused on the teachers' thoughts about their specific behaviours during each lesson observed, the subsequent interviews were intended to explore their more general understanding and beliefs in relation to the

concept of LA and approaches to its construction, as well as their reflection on their own practice. The rationale for leaving the interviews to the very last stage of the data collection was to allow me the opportunity to explore 'doing before talking'. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner, due to the following considerations: first, guided by a series of topics or loosely defined questions, such interviews allow the interview to proceed as a conversation (Kvale, 1996) rather than "a formalised exchange in which the interviewer imposes his or her authority on the interviewee" (Borg, 2006, p. 203); second, the conversational style is conducive to building up rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee, which is crucial to the quality of the inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 1994); third, a two-way conversation enables the interviewee to take an active part and impedes considerably the researcher's dominance in the research (Woods, 1996); fourth, in comparison with the closed-ended questions in structured interviews, open-ended questions generate more detailed data which are qualitatively richer and deeper (Anderson, Burns, & Dunkin, 1989).

The interviews with the teachers were conducted after most of the observations were finished. With four teachers, the interviews and the second post-lesson discussions were carried out on the same occasion, but they were clearly separated, that is, we discussed the lessons first, and then shifted to the interviews. Hard copies of the interview outline (see Appendix 12A) were given to the teachers at a departmental meeting late in November, and an opportunity was affordable to them to read through the questions and ask for any clarification. The interviews were held either in the teachers' offices or in the school meeting room. They were conducted in Chinese, and each lasted thirty minutes or so. They were audio-recorded, and summarised afterwards. Summaries were sent to the teachers for respondent validation, correction, amplification and further comment.

Interviews with the school management

As mentioned above, interviews were also conducted with the school management, one with the principal and two with the ED. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the school vision and guidelines regarding the development of LA, so as to have better knowledge of the context in which the teacher participants operated.

The interview with the principal was conducted in the second week of the semester. Due to the principal's tight schedule, making an appointment for the interview was not easy: he did not always reply to emails, and I felt it impolite to phone or text him. Fortunately, I met him by chance in the school corridor and took the opportunity to make a time for the interview, which he had orally agreed to long before. Surprisingly, he suggested the next day for the actual interview because he would soon be away again. It was inappropriate to say no to the suggested time, but that left little time to put in place the proper procedures to deal with the information letter, consent form, and interview questions (see Appendix 12B). I then sent these to the principal as soon as I could and brought along hard copies to the interview. He quickly went through the forms, signed the consent, and admitted that he had not had time to peruse the interview questions in advance, but he expressed no concern about that and claimed his responses would be even more authentic.

The interview was carried out in the principal's office, mainly in Chinese with a few expressions in English initiated by him. The interview lasted approximately fifty minutes. Apart from the interview, the principal also had several public talks published in the local newspaper and posted on the school website. With his consent, these resources were also collected as documentary data.

With the ED, I interviewed him twice, one at an early stage of the ACE innovation project (see Section 3.2.2) inquiring into his planning, and the other at the close of the semester exploring his comments and reflection. The first interview, with the question outline (see Appendix 12C-1) sent at the beginning of the semester, took place a month later; the reason was that the ED preferred an extended time to enable him to better organise his thinking. The interview was conducted in the ED's office, at his desk, to be more specific, where he could use his computer as usual. A major part of the interview was taken up with the ED elaborating on the ACE innovation project, which he had co-developed (with former colleagues) and implemented in other schools, and was then promoting at Zia (see Section 3.2.2). From time to time during the interview, the ED referred to some documents stored in his computer, including PowerPoint slides and a teacher Training Booklet (TB). These documents, with the ED's consent, were also obtained as data.

The second interview with the ED was conducted late in December when I had finished the data collection with all the teacher participants. The question outline (see Appendix 12C-2) was sent a week in advance. After receiving my request (in oral form) for the interview, the ED expressed his wish to hear my comments on the lessons that I had observed of the teacher participants. Bearing in mind the research ethics in relation to participants' privacy and data use, as well as what might be of benefit to the school, I responded with my willingness to share my views on language teaching and learning in general, but not on any particular practice of any particular teacher; and he agreed. For this interview, the ED made notes on the interview questions and appeared well-prepared. During the interview, he made comments as well as judgements on some teachers' practices and illustrated with details he had observed. He expressed no concern with the challenges and problems regarding the project implementation; he also displayed confidence regarding future improvement, towards which he would focus more on detailed, specific operational techniques.

3.4.5 A summary of the collected data

In summary, following the procedures as reported above, large amounts of data were gathered by the end of the data collection process, including videos of observed lessons, audios of interviews and post-lesson discussions as well as the departmental open discussions. In addition, supplementary documents were collected relating to both the school management and the teachers, including the principal's public talks, the ACE project teacher training resources, and classroom materials relating to the observed lessons. Such abundant data, on the one hand, provided rich sources for the subsequent data analysis; on the other hand, it made the next step of data management and selection demanding (and delicate).

3.5 Data analysis

The collected data were carefully managed and systematically analysed following the guidelines of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This section will give a detailed account in relation to the data management and analysis.

3.5.1 Grounded theory as data analysis guidelines

Strauss and Corbin (1994) define grounded theory as 'a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed' (p. 273). Aiming at theory generation, data analysis is simultaneously involved in data collection, achieved through systematic coding, and assisted by constant comparison and memo writing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These strategies were adopted in the data analysis of the present study, and coding was facilitated by the computer software NVivo 10.

3.5.2 Initial data processing during data collection

As informed by grounded theory, data processing commenced simultaneously alongside the data collection. First of all, the observed lessons were roughly transcribed by hand at the earliest possible opportunity, the main purpose for this being to prepare for the subsequent post-lesson discussions. In effect, it was the first sifting-through of the lessons, when I familiarised myself with the data and helped to identify salient episodes. Secondly, a summary closely followed every discussion and interview. Primarily as a means for respondent validation of the data, it processed the data meanwhile, and contributed to my further familiarisation with the data. Thirdly, expanding the field notes into typed word documents and keeping the research journal were examples of concurrent data collection and analysis, as my reflections and interpretations were involved immediately and interplayed with the data.

3.5.3 Data management, transcription and translation

Managing the data

A crucial element in the data management is data security. To prevent against any data loss, I made it a regular practice to duplicate every recorded file and store the copies separately on an external hard drive.

For a clear mapping, after the data collection was completed, the data files were categorised, renamed with consistent labels, and then organised into folders. The data categories included audios, videos, documents, textbooks, PowerPoint slides,

students' worksheets, and so on. These files were named or renamed on the basis of participants, research instruments, file type and language when necessary. Pseudonyms (numbering in case of teachers) and abbreviations or initials were employed with consistency. For example, T1_L1_PLD_Trans_E was the English version of the transcripts of post-lesson discussion on Teacher 1's first observed lesson.

Two sets of folders were set up, with one for all electronic files and the other for hard copies and other materials. Each folder contained twelve sub-folders, with nine for the nine teacher participants, one for the principal, one for the ED, and one for collective data such as the departmental open discussions. The rationale for such an organisation was that each participant was treated as a sub-case of the school case as a whole, and comparisons were to be made both within and across sub-cases.

Using NVivo 10

It has been demonstrated that NVivo can facilitate many aspects of the iterative data handling and analysis process associated with grounded theory and help provide a transparent account (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004, 2006). Given the multi methods employed for data collection and the rich data gathered in this study, NVivo 10 (http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx) was chosen as the facilitating tool for data analysis. However, with the awareness that computer software is not a replacement for ways people extract information from data (Bazeley, 2007), I did not restrict myself to the use of NVivo, and manual analysis was integrated when more suitable.

Specifically, NVivo 10 was applied in this study in the following ways: 1) it served as a container, an organiser and a display platform for the rich data of various types, including word documents, audios and PDFs; 2) it facilitated transcribing the recorded data with the convenience of making all the transcripts, rough or accurate, locatable in terms of time span and retrievable in terms of the link between them and the raw data; 3) it performed as the workplace of all coding, categorising and memoing, with the ease of constant comparison accessible all the time; and 4) it helped display the initial findings in the form of

reports, figures and graphs, and eased the writing up of the findings.

Transcribing, tabulating and translating the data

Transcribing the data was conducted during and after the data collection, first manually and later assisted by NVivo 10. As reported in Section 3.4.2, rough manual transcription was undertaken as every lesson was observed. Given the practicality and necessity of full transcription of all the video files, no further full transcription was done until the significant episodes were identified. Instead, the observed lessons were tabulated on different levels, first more generally then with more specific foci. This tabulating process was indeed the sifting-through and coding of the observation data. I will leave the details to the coding section (3.5.4). Also tabulated but not transcribed were the departmental open discussions, and the rationale for that was the general nature and relatively low relevance of those discussions to the focus of this study.

The interviews and the post-lesson discussions were transcribed in NVivo 10 in the original Chinese language. Given the easy link that NVivo 10 offers between the transcripts and the raw data as mentioned earlier, the initial transcription was on a general basis, and a more rigid transcription was conducted when the significant extracts were identified after the initial coding, following Barnard and Burns' (2012b) conventions (which are presented in Section 4.2).

Likewise, most of the full text translation was not conducted before significant extracts were identified. However, for a general familiarisation of the translation process and a means to enhance translation accuracy, two interviews were fully translated, checked by, and discussed with the supervisor, who is a proficient Chinese user as well as a native English speaker. Furthermore, the translated versions were partially reviewed and back-translated by a doctoral student friend who is a native Chinese speaker. In addition, key concepts in relation to LA were discussed in depth with the supervisor and presented in the findings (see Section 4.3.1).

3.5.4 Coding and theory constructing

Coding is the analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualized,

and integrated to form theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3). Regarding the coding process, Charmaz (2006) defines four phases – initial coding, focused coding, axial coding and theoretical coding, while Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify three – open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. However, the essence in both is data disassembling and reassembling, aiming at development of theory (Cohen et al., 2011). While on the whole, the process is iterative and repetitive, involving many back-and-forth movements, Creswell (2007) recommends six practical steps to set out the process: get a sense of the whole; pick one document; code the document; make a list of the codes; check the list with the data; and reduce the list of codes to get five or seven themes or categories. These steps were generally followed as guidelines at the initial stage, but on the whole the coding process was mainly informed by the four phases that Charmaz (2006) suggests. The coding process was largely assisted by NVivo 10, but partially done by hand as well. The following is a detailed report.

Charmaz (2006) suggests four phases of coding from disassembling the raw data to reassembling them into theory. However, in reality it was not a linear or one-off procedure. Rather, it required numbers of separations, re-arrangements and synthesising in discursive rounds. To sort out and conceptualise the multi types of data from the many participants, I shuttled back and forth through the data a number of times.

I started with the interview with one teacher and then went through all the interviews, aiming to develop a tentative framework of beliefs about LA at Zia. However, what was contained in the interviews was far richer than just beliefs. Bearing in mind the important warning with grounded theory, I remained open-minded, stuck to the data and took the following steps.

Firstly, I went over the interview with Teacher 2 – who was ranked on the top as the most respectable English teacher at Zia, and thus assumed as the easiest case to start with – and did the initial coding. I underlined every meaningful unit of the data, including words, phrases, sentences or cluster of sentences. After that, I labelled them with tentative and provisional names, termed as nodes in NVivo. As a result, dozens of such nodes were generated after coding of the first interview. To avoid being drowned in an ocean of nodes, I then started tentative

categorising, or focused coding in Charmaz's (2006) term. The second step resulted in a hierarchy of nodes, with the number of mother nodes much smaller and looking manageable, but the children nodes remained open and would not block any new entry. Very often during this process, I encountered meaningful units with multiple possibilities of coding. In those cases, I labelled them with double or even triple nodes, and such coding was easily displayed in the coding stripes in NVivo 10 (see a sample below).
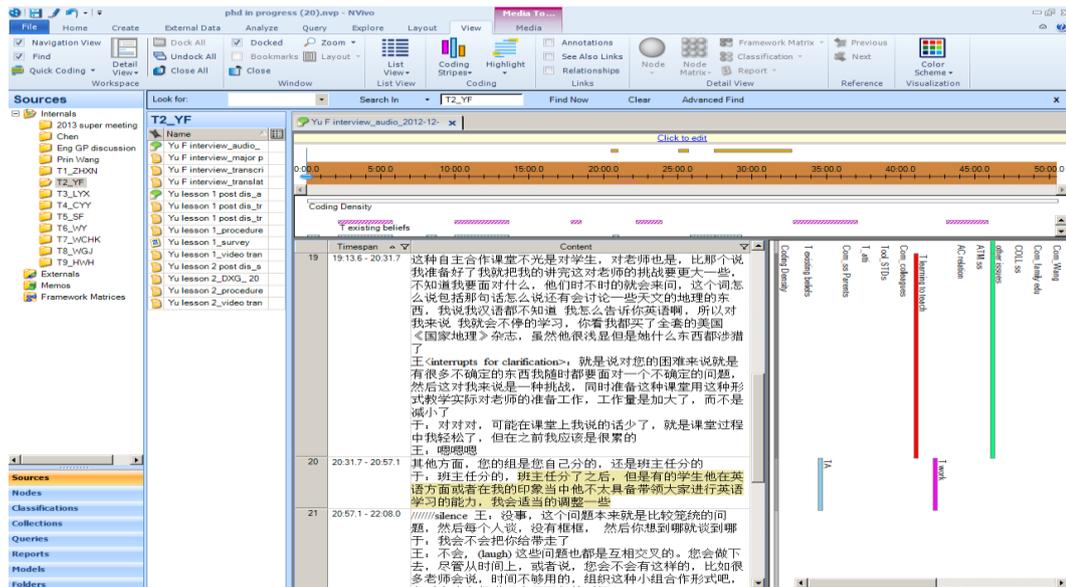
I repeated the process of initial and focused coding with the other interviews, including those with the principal and the ED. With an open mind, I allowed nodes to fall into an existing category or belong to none. By the end of this process, a system of coding hierarchy took shape (see a sample below).

With the original aim to find out mainly beliefs regarding LA from the interview data, the actual outcomes also revealed other major categories such as beliefs about key elements for classroom instruction, teachers' attitudes towards a given model, and so on. At the early stage of the analysis, some branches of the nodes seemed unimportant or irrelevant, but they were anyhow saved open for possible later use.

Having captured an overview of the managers' and teachers' interpretations of the concept of LA and teachers' reported practices, I then moved on to investigate what happened in the classrooms. To code the observed lessons, as I did with the interview data, I first segmented a lesson of T2 into chunks, following the chronological order of the lesson procedures, such as *pre-class informal chat, student presentation, leading into the topic, introducing sentence pattern 1*, and so on. After that, each procedure was further segmented into more specific actions. For example, *the student presentation* session involved *teacher's instructions, teacher and students negotiating content of the presentation, the presentation, and peer feedback*. In this way, I labelled the procedures and actions, and they formed the initial codes and categories of observation data.

Subsequently, I proceeded with the post-lesson discussions with Teacher 2 about the lesson and did a matching exercise between observed behaviours and stated rationales. After this process, the non-discussed chunks of actions were put aside, leaving more focus on the discussed practices. When the whole set of data from Teacher 2 was completed, data from different sources were compared and contrasted, and convergences and divergences emerged; on this basis, a tentative explanation was developed regarding Teacher 2's beliefs and practices. Then I went through the processes of axial coding and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). The analysis in this process was inductive on the one hand, in that categories emerged from the data; but on the other, it was informed by the research questions and the conceptual framework that the study applied. To be more specific, the top level of categories or nodes (beliefs, practices, divergences and convergences, and explanations) mainly followed the research questions. Further, to provide an explanation, possible influential factors were sought, and the initial categories were sorted in such terms as family education, principal influence, colleagues, students and their parents and teachers' existing beliefs

about classroom instruction, and educational vision.

After the analysis of a whole individual case, I went back to the initial coding of other observed lessons. What I did differently was, instead of going through the two processes of disassembling each lesson into its constituent parts, I repeated only the first process in the first round, that is, to disassemble the lessons into major chunks. After that, the chunks were compared and contrasted across teachers. As a result, common chunks were identified, as well as peculiar or unique ones. The common chunks were chosen as foci and then further disassembled into actions. The actions were coded in reference to what was done with Teacher 2, with the awareness that opposite and different actions would arise and should be added to the initial nodes or focused categories. By repeatedly doing this, saturation theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) was developed and enhanced.

By comparing the actions within the common chunks across teachers, commonalities as well as divergences were identified regarding how each action was taken. I then repeated the process with the whole sets of data with other teachers. Themes emerged gradually: firstly, different teachers conducted similar and divergent activities to develop LA; secondly, teachers conducting the same activity operated it in either similar or different actions; thirdly, teachers taking the same action maintained similar or divergent rationales. Comparisons and contrasts were made constantly throughout the whole process, between understandings, practices and rationales within and across teachers. Furthermore, as categorisation proceeded and themes developed, various contextual factors appeared on both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. Gradually, and increasingly, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Cole & Engeström, 1993) seemed to be, and was eventually adopted as, the suitable conceptual framework, which embraces the key contextual factors in one map and presents a logical explanation between them.

Throughout the coding process, memos were kept to note down whatever flashed through my mind, such as hunches and uncertain thoughts. For example, having some points impressed in my mind after having analysed the first interview, when analysing the observed lessons of the first teacher, I felt a certain practice was a

reflection of a certain belief of hers. I then jotted down a quick note in the memos - '*convergence: an integration of autonomy and collaboration*'. The memo of the hunch was followed up later with supporting evidence. In this way, the memos recorded my developed and developing thoughts during the data analysis process. Also the memos served as reflections on actions, and at a later stage were integrated into the research journal.

In short, the data analysis commenced during the data collection, was further processed afterwards, and systematically conducted. The coding process embraced initial coding, focused coding, axial coding and theoretical coding. Saturation sampling was addressed, and comparisons and contrasts were constantly made until patterns and themes emerged. Memos were kept for both data analysis and audit inquiry. In the next section, I will discuss the quality issues of this research.

3.6 Quality evaluation

In this section, I will first present key criteria for quality interpretative research widely accepted in the methodological literature and then describe in detail strategies that I adopted for the fulfilment of the criteria.

3.6.1 Evaluation criteria

A number of terms are found describing the research rigour or quality issues in literature on research methodology, among which validity and reliability are applied and discussed most widely. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four key criteria of validity in qualitative research – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability – and thus prefer to replace reliability with terms such as credibility, neutrality, confirmability, consistency, applicability, trustworthiness, transferability, and in particular the notion of dependability. With no intention of tackling these terms in depth, this section addresses validity and trustworthiness in an integrated manner. The main purposes are: first to report the strategies taken to achieve the utmost 'fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched' (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 48), and then to demonstrate that 'an account accurately represents those features that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise'

(Hammersley, 1987, p. 69).

3.6.2 Strategies for validity and trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007, pp. 239-246) have summarised a number of steps that researchers can take to address the rigour in qualitative research. Eight strategies are undertaken in this study: prolonged engagement, building rapport with the participants, member checking / respondent validation, triangulation, peer debriefing, rich and thick description, audit inquiry, and examination of personal bias and/or subjectivity. Next, I will give a detailed account of each of these strategies.

Prolonged engagement

Prior to the formal data collection, I had visited the school several times. By doing so, I familiarised myself to a certain extent with the setting and some participants. The formal data collection lasted over five months, which covered a complete semester including the pre-school teacher training session. During the five months, regardless of whether there was an appointment with a participant or not, I immersed myself at Zia for most of the school hours. Such an extended and extensive immersion in the field made the researcher's presence part of the context, and thus reduced considerably the artificial or interfering element in relation to the observer effects (Cohen et al., 2011).

Building rapport with the participants

The factual accuracy of the research account primarily depends on whether the participants tell the 'truth' or not, and well-built rapport between the researcher and the participants can help considerably with the issue of trustworthiness. In pursuit of this, I sought opportunities to make informal contact with the participants, and offered as much help as possible with some laborious departmental routine work, such as doing the meeting minutes. In addition, I tactfully declined the director's request for some recorded videos for institutional use. The demonstration of my rigorous commitment to the research ethics guidelines I had agreed to abide by reassured the participants and enhanced their trust in me.

Member checking /respondent validation

Member checking offers opportunity for the respondents to assess their intentionality, to correct factual errors, to add further information or to put information on record (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address this issue, a summary was sent to the participants after each interview or post-lesson discussions for them to make any addition, deletion or further comments.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a powerful technique in qualitative research, attempting to explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviours (Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, multiple methods were employed to capture the understandings and practices in relation to the development of LA. For instance, although observation was the main channel to investigate teachers' practices and interview was to explore beliefs, teachers reported some practices in the interviews and revealed their beliefs in the post-lesson discussions. The overriding data provided multiple sources for every phenomenon, which enhanced the richness to a great extent. Further use of triangulation was observing multiple lessons of one teacher over an extended period of time. In addition, a wide range of data was collected regarding one lesson (e.g., textbooks, PowerPoint slides, and students' worksheets), which thus allowed multiple viewpoints on one lesson to demonstrate the complexity of the observed lesson.

Peer debriefing

Peer debriefing means exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner akin to cross-examination, in order to test honesty, working hypotheses and to identify the next steps in the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 219, 301). Peer debriefing in this study was addressed in two ways. On the one hand, during the data collection, I regularly reported to and discussed with the supervisory panel changes in the field, seeking their advice on adjustments that needed to be made. Constant discussions were also held on the coding process in the course of data analysis. In addition, I had a PhD colleague as a debriefing peer, and I presented her on several occasions with transcripts for cross-checking.

Thick description and rich interpretation

While it is contested whether generalisability can be achieved or not, Schofield (1990, p. 200) suggests that it is important to provide a clear, detailed and in-depth description so that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research are generalisable to another situation. In this study, rich and thick description was given, first of all, to the research setting, particularly the peculiar contextual information relating to the school, the principal, teachers' routines, and what was happening in the school. This thickness allowed me to make reasonably sound inferences, leading to a rich interpretation of the data. By doing so, findings and implications from this study may be relatable to other settings, whether similar or different in some regards. Efforts were also expended to produce an honest and transparent description of the processes of data collection and analysis. By doing so, readers and users of the research may determine whether transferability is possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Audit inquiry

An audit trail was kept in three ways. Firstly, samples of the research instruments are attached in the appendices, including interview question outlines, observation and post-lesson discussion schedules and transcripts, and documentary materials (e.g., the Learning Guide). Secondly, a complete record of the raw data, including videos, audios, electronic or hard copies of documents, has been accessible to the supervisory panel as well as other examiners during the research, and will be for a further five years. Also, the research journal and the memo-writing served as a process-checker. These measures ensured the auditability of the whole research to a large extent.

Examination of personal bias and/or subjectivity

Although I have endeavoured to make the study as methodologically rigorous and systematic as possible, I am fully aware that complete objectivity is not possible in human research, and personal biases are unavoidable. First of all, my ways of asking questions, during the interviews and post-lesson discussions, were not free of problems. In a few cases when the participants appeared hesitant about responding to the questions, my rewording of the questions was not as successful

as expected, and it took a few attempts to get the conversation back on course. Further, bearing in mind the importance of probing for more information, sometimes I might have probed to an excessive extent, which may have caused some embarrassment. These problems became evident when I listened to the recordings to write summaries, so I noted down in the research journal, and addressed them in the discussions and interviews which took place later. Caution was also followed in the analysis of the data obtained in those cases. In addition, I acknowledge the possible biases in interpreting the data. Particularly, with years of language teaching experience at both tertiary and secondary levels, I could hardly have remained neutral and avoided being judgemental. This awareness was raised to the supervisory panel, and their monitoring on the findings as well as the analysing process moderated the effect of such biases and subjectivity.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has provided an account of the main issues regarding the designing and conduct of this study. The methodological framework was presented as the theoretical guidelines for this study, followed by a detailed description of the research setting as well as the participants. After a brief discussion of the ethical issues, this chapter moved on to the data collection and analysis. The approaches and instruments employed were described following the rationale for their use. The last section of this chapter discussed the issue of quality evaluation.

In short, this project is a case study, adopting qualitative methods within the interpretative paradigms. It was conducted in a private Chinese secondary school with advantageous conditions over most state-run public schools, and all the English teachers, a total of nine, participated in this research. Data collection and analysis were informed and guided by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Data gathering methods included mainly observations, post-lesson discussions, and interviews. Data analysis followed Charmaz's (2006) coding system, and was largely assisted by NVivo 10. Validity and trustworthiness were taken as the main criteria for the quality evaluation, and addressed on an integrated basis.

The next chapter will present and comment on the main findings of this study

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN THE CASE STUDY SCHOOL

Chapter Three has provided a comprehensive account of the methodological design and operation in the process of seeking answers to the research questions defined in Chapter Two. This chapter will report the research findings. Targeted critical commentary will also be provided from time to time, so as to allow significant themes to stand out. These will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

To recap, the overarching question of this research was: How might the findings of the present study contribute to a refined academic understanding of the role of control shift in the development of learner autonomy (LA)? The question was addressed in four subsidiary questions:

1. How was learner autonomy interpreted in a Chinese secondary school?
2. In what ways was learner autonomy developed through control shifts in the school?
3. In what ways did the administrators' and the teachers' beliefs converge with or diverge from their practices?
4. How should the convergences and divergences be explained in the wider sociocultural context?

Questions 1 and 2 are fully and explicitly answered in this chapter. Regarding Questions 3 and 4, while evidence is substantially provided in this chapter and relevant themes signalled, explicit answers to these two questions will be given in the following chapter after a more thorough and comprehensive discussion.

In brief, the findings displayed a great diversity in both the beliefs and the practices of both the teachers and the school administrators in relation to the development of LA through the shift of control. Their beliefs and practices exhibited a complex and dynamic range of convergences and divergences. An explanation of the convergences and divergences was attributed to various factors

in the wider socio-cultural context where the activity of LA development was conducted. Among these factors, three prominent ones were: understanding of the concept of LA, trust in learners' ability to take control, and awareness of the nature of the actions taken for the achievement of the goal of LA. These findings are presented at length in three major sections: management interpretation and promotion of LA; teachers' practices with features of learner control; and teachers' cognition about learner autonomy. A summary of the findings is provided at the end of the chapter.

The presentation of data follows the conventions below.

P.I	Interview with the principal
ED.I1	1st interview with the ED
T1.I	Interview with Teacher 1
T1.L1	1st lesson of Teacher 1
T1.L1.PPT	PowerPoint Slides used in 1st lesson of Teacher 1
T1.L1.LG	Learning Guide used in 1st lesson of Teacher 1
T1.O1	Observation of 1st lesson of Teacher 1
T1.PLD1	Post-lesson discussion of 1st lesson of Teacher 1
OD1	1st Open discussion
TB # 1.1	Section 1.1 of the school project Training Booklet
ES	The classroom instruction Evaluation Standards
FN	Field notes

4.1 Management interpretation and promotion of LA

This section reports the interpretation of the notion of LA at Zia (the school in which the study was based) and the on-going practices recommended there to promote LA. The data drawn on for this section were retrieved from four sources: the interview with the principal (P.I); two interviews with the executive director (ED.I1; ED.I2); the school innovation project Training Booklet (TB) which the ED used in the pre-school teacher professional development session; and the principal's public talk that was released on the school's website. All these data were originally in Chinese, and the extracts in this section are my own translation (as discussed in Section 3.5.3).

The section is organised in two parts: the principal's voice and the school innovation project led by the ED. The principal's views consist of three aspects: status of LA at Zia, understanding of the concept and the role of control shift and student collaboration in LA construction. The ED's project generally follows the structure and major elements of the Training Booklet (TB) and finishes with the teacher training workshops. By this organisation, I wish to present general and practical guidelines, under which the teachers performed their practices in relation to LA development.

4.1.1 The principal's voice

The principal highly valued LA, making it a key school vision. He interpreted the notion in terms of three changes that would take place in the construction of LA, each of which will be discussed in detail in the following subsections.

4.1.1.1 Learner autonomy as a key school vision

Data showed that LA was highlighted at Zia as a key school vision, integrated in the school motto: "For both good academic grades and holistic development". According to the principal, a fundamental element of students' holistic development was their capacity for autonomous development, which was "an essential component of education, a perennial theme, and an indispensable ability for students"; and the benefits of LA would be reflected in "students' future competitiveness and lifelong learning". For these reasons, it was important to the principal that "the concept be commonly understood and its values become a shared belief in the education field" (P.I).

4.1.1.2 Three fundamental features of autonomous learners

The principal viewed LA as learners having the motivation to learn, being self-disciplined, and knowing how to learn. He was also aware of the developmental and the social attributes of LA. These were evidenced in two interviews: one with a local newspaper about his educational beliefs and the other with me for this study. His responses involved the meaning of LA, characteristics of autonomous students, and the relationship between autonomy and collaboration.

In the newspaper interview, the principal presented his general educational beliefs and three changes that should take place with students in the construction of LA:

> […] from "[others] want me to learn" *(yào wǒ xué)* to "I want to learn" *(wǒ yào xué);* from "other-disciplined" *(tā lǜ)* to "self-disciplined" *(zì lǜ);* and from "learning to be able" *(xué huì)* to "being able to learn" *(huì xué)*. (Zibo Shangwu, 2011)

As shown in the Chinese Pinyin, key ideas were delicately-worded. In order to reflect the meaning and form of the original data, a literal translation has been given. Three dimensions of autonomy were expressed. First of all, autonomous learners have the desire to learn by themselves rather than being pushed by others to learn. Secondly, autonomous learners are able to regulate themselves and do what they are obliged to do in order to make improvement, even if the situation is tough or unpleasant. This suggests that, for the aim of better achievement, autonomous learners maintain mental control of their enthusiasm for learning as well as physical control of learning behaviours throughout the learning process. Thirdly, autonomous learners pay more attention to the process of acquiring knowledge than just the content of existing knowledge.

These points were confirmed in the interview with the principal, which conveyed the ideas in similar phrases, and also emphasised the developmental and the collaborative attributes of LA.

> Developing autonomy is a gradual process - from "[others] want me to learn" *(yào wǒ xué)* to "I want to learn" (*wǒ yào xué*) and then to "I learn thirstily" (*wǒ rú jī sì kě dì xué*), and from "other-disciplined" *(tā lǜ)* to "self-disciplined" *(zì lǜ)* and then to "disciplining others" *(lǜ tā)*. These are three levels [of autonomy]. […] they themselves learn, and also are able to help others to learn ― this is the third level. (P.I)

Here, the phrase "levels of autonomy" indicates somehow a control growing over time, including increased inner drive for learning (*"I want to learn" to "I learn more thirstily"*) and more initiatives that learners take (*"self-disciplined" to "disciplining others"*). The expression "disciplining others" (*lǜ tā*), which is the reverse expression of other-disciplined (*tā lǜ*), carries a positive connotation in this discourse, meaning "exerting influence, usually positive one, on others" – more specifically, "able to help others to learn" as the principal clarified (P.I).

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This "third level" in the quotation implies a social dimension of autonomy, which became evident in his description of the relationship between autonomy and collaboration as "mutually complementary and supplementary, the former being premise and foundation" (P.I).

In short, the principal's main points regarding the notion of LA include learners' desire for learning and maintenance of motivation, taking initiatives and control of learning behaviours, valuing and having the know-how knowledge about learning, and being willing and able to learn with peers. These points concern three dimensions of LA: psychologically, it is an active attitude; technically, learners know the way of learning; and socially, they learn from more capable others, including teachers and other peer learners.

4.1.1.3 Developing learner autonomy through control shift

The principal held that teachers must release some control to students and allow space for them to inquire and explore. In his elaboration of this point, he stressed the importance of the active nature of classroom learning and differentiated the concept of releasing control from that of letting the class become chaotic. That is, genuine natural learning takes place in a positive classroom atmosphere in which students are engaged in learning actively in a stress-free manner; and it is students' learning rather than teachers' teaching that should take the central place of a lesson. For these reasons, teachers should release some control to students, through which teachers' authority is delegated to some extent and more opportunities are created for students to take responsibility.

> […] schools and teachers must give freedom to children. This is a completely different concept from chaos. […] tuán jié, jǐn zhāng, yán sù, huó pō1! Class must be like this: as long as students are engaged, […] learning takes place. A good lesson depends not on how much a teacher has taught, but how much students have learned, digested and produced (emphasis in original). (P.I)

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[1] Literally translated as "be united as well as alert, earnest as well as lively" – a well-known Chinese saying originated as a Mao Zedong's quote during the Anti-Japanese War in the 1930s, now widely cited in the field of education, referring to a positive classroom atmosphere in which students are engaged in learning actively in a stress-free manner with good rapport between students and the teacher due to an equal and pleasant relationship (Su, 2011).

Using the example of children learning to ride a bicycle, he spoke positively about risk-taking in control relinquishment. Relinquishing control to students may involve risks or result in failure, yet it is essential to do so in order to develop independence in students. Put differently, withholding control from students in the name of safety deprives them of opportunities for learning to be independent.

> There is risk if you let them go, but it will always be a problem if you don't. It's like learning to ride a bicycle. Letting him go, he may fall over. However, not to [allow him to] try, he'll never be able to do it. You must let him take the first step [without being held hands]. (P.I)

To support teachers to develop LA at Zia, the principal gave some general guidelines to build teachers' beliefs in LA, to make it a shared value, and to provide practical support. Regarding teachers' beliefs, he said,

> Teachers must have the belief that LA is really important for students' lifelong development. Otherwise, they wouldn't do it. Or they may do, but just as lip-service. They wouldn't really care or try to do it properly. So from my side I need first to unify people's mind. Only when the agreement [on the benefits of LA] is reached, could we win. (P.I)

As to how to develop such a belief, however, the principal did not give a concrete answer but generally mentioned to teachers about the idea at various staff meetings. With respect to practical support for the teachers, the principal mentioned setting up a platform, providing a model to start with, helping with specific techniques and skills, and awarding them with pay rise. Being aware that the ED was running a school innovation project and promoting an ACE Class Model (see Section 3.2.2), I assume that what the principal referred to was the same model, which will be presented in detail next in Section 4.1.2.

The principal also anticipated that some teachers might encounter some discomfort at the beginning stage in adopting a new approach. Nevertheless, he was determined to get the teachers to take the first step then, and he made the commitment that the school would support the teachers to transition. He said,

> Everyone has to transit *from a comfortable zone to an uncomfortable zone* (originally in English), then how can we help? We'll provide a platform, techniques and skills, and a model. When they [the teachers]

are able to do it [use the new LA-oriented approach], they won't resist
that much, and then let them enjoy some fruits, *stick to it and carry it
on* (originally in English). Encourage them to keep going, and I also
raise their salary, which is a must, even if that makes me bankrupt
<laugh>. (P.I)

In short, this section reports the principal's points of view in relation to the
promotion of LA at Zia, concerning its significance, meanings, and approaches to
implementation as well as school actions for teacher support. Table 4 provides a
summary.

Table 4: Summary of the principal's beliefs about LA

Significance	An essential component of education; a perennial theme; and an indispensable ability for students.
Meaning of the concept	Three features of autonomous students: Wanting to learn; being self-disciplined; and knowing how to learn.
	Three dimensions of LA: Psychologically, it is an active attitude; technically, it means knowing the way of learning; socially, learners learn from more capable others.
Key to LA implementation	Teachers must release some control to students and allow space for them to inquire and explore.
	Teachers must have the belief that LA is really important for students' lifelong development.
Teacher support	To build teachers' beliefs in LA;
	To provide a practical model.

Now I will move on to present and discuss the ED's innovation project, including
the ACE Class Model.

4.1.2 The executive director's innovation project

The project was led by the ED, and entitled (literally) *Autonomous, Collaborative,
Efficient Class Innovation*. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the project was launched
at Zia coincidentally at the same time that the current study was in its initial stage,
and the ED had developed as well as implemented the project in several other
schools in southern China. He had also created a Training Booklet (TB) and used
it at Zia for teacher professional development prior to the start of semester. The
booklet and two interviews with the ED were the major data sources for this
section. The ED referred frequently to the booklet during the interviews, which

resulted in considerable repetition of the data he contributed. In such cases, both sources are cited, for example, "ED.I1 & TB # 2.1" means the data were found in both the first interview and the booklet.

The ED referred to the project as *3-6-4-4 Programme*, figures representing three core concepts, six key principles, four steps for knowledge construction and classroom instruction, and four measures for teacher implementation (ED.I1 & TB # 2.1). The following sub-sections present these components in detail.

4.1.2.1 Three core concepts

The three core concepts were autonomy, collaboration and efficiency. The ED defined efficiency as the ultimate goal, for which "students learn autonomously by themselves and collaboratively with peers; and in the similar manners they manage their learning and other school behaviours" (ED.I1). This quotation shows that the ED conceived autonomy and collaboration as two paralleled concepts as modes of learning and its management, the aim of which was to optimise learning efficiency. It also indicates a close relationship between autonomy and learning on one's own, and that between collaboration and working with others. These points are reflected and confirmed in other parts of the programme, as seen in the following sections, particularly the ACE Class Model in Section 4.1.2.3.

4.1.2.2 Six key principles

The ED emphasised six key principles for the implementation of the ACE Class Innovation, which were:

1) Students are the agents *(zhu ti)* of their own learning, for which autonomy *(zi zhu)* is essential;
2) Opportunities must be guaranteed for students' self-study *(zi xue)* prior to teacher instruction and peer sharing;
3) Collaborative learning should be applied, through group discussion and presentation;
4) Procedure for classroom instruction should be based on the process of knowledge construction; and the Learning Guide (see further explanation in Section 4.1.2.4) should reflect the procedure;
5) Management should be both democratic and autonomous, applicable to both academic learning and general behaviours;
6) Formative assessment should be adopted, especially process assessment, for which a matrix assessment system should be

established. (ED.I1 &TB # 2.1)

The first principle highlighted learners' agency *(zhu ti xing)* in LA: "Between teachers and students, students are the centre", and "learning is eventually realised through one's own internalisation" (ED.I1). The second principle stressed that learning should start from students rather than teachers. As the ED elaborated, "with learning content that students can self-study or understand through preview, let them solve it by themselves, during which they construct knowledge through reading, memorising, and figuring things out on their own" (ED.I1).

The third principle emphasised collaborative learning, which the ED regarded as an extension of individual learning. He said, "As the agents of learning, students learn first on their own, […] but as members of a class or a group, they together learn and manage the group or the class which they are in" (ED.I1). The ED specified two ways of collaboration: sharing and helping. By sharing, "students collaborate in the process of questioning or arguing with each other, during which they deal with the different understandings, solutions, or outcomes that they have gained through their self-inquiry" (ED.I1). This elaboration made it clear that such negotiation of meaning is based on, and takes place after, students' self-inquiry. As to helping, the ED made a differentiation between "offering help" and "seeking help", saying that, by comparison, "actively seeking help" is more of an autonomous nature than "waiting for help to be offered". The reason was that "being offered help by a classmate is in nature no different from being taught by a teacher, in which the helped student remains a passive recipient and does not exercise active control" (ED.I1).

The fourth principle provided the general guideline for classroom instruction, which, according to the ED, should follow the process of knowledge construction. This was presented in the project booklet as a separate section (TB #2.1.3). I will accordingly discuss it separately in Section 4.1.2.3. The fifth principle concerned the management of learning and that of general behaviours, the former dealing with "learning matters such as keeping a record of progress and organising learning materials", and the latter with "other school performances such as classroom discipline or moral behaviours" (ED.I1). By democratic *(min zhu)*, the ED meant the same thing as "collaborative" *(he zuo)*, evidence of which can be

seen in the interchangeable use of these two words throughout the interview.

The last principle stressed the importance of formative assessment, in recognition of both learning process and outcomes. "This is particularly important in the Chinese education system, because students care seriously about what is assessed. Therefore assessing learning process can help students to change their everyday learning behaviours and to take a more active role" (ED.I1).

In short, the six principles emphasised students' agency for learning; self-learning before learning from others; collaborative learning; consistency between the classroom instruction procedure and the process of knowledge construction (to be elaborated next in Section 4.1.2.3); autonomy and collaboration in both academic learning and behavioural management; and formative assessment.

Now, I will move on to present the details of the classroom instruction procedure indicated in the fourth principle.

4.1.2.3 Four-step classroom instruction model

As mentioned earlier, the model was created by the ED and termed ACE Class Model, highlighting *autonomous* and *collaborative* learning as two important means for the aim of *efficient* learning (see Section 4.1.2.1). According to the ED, classroom instruction should follow four steps in accordance with the process of knowledge construction: self-study *(zi xue)*, discussion *(tao lun)*, presentation *(zhan shi)*, and internalisation *(nei hua)*. As illustrated in Figure 7, the model starts with individual learning, continues with intra-group collaborative learning through discussion followed by inter-group collaborative learning through presentation, and ends with internalisation.
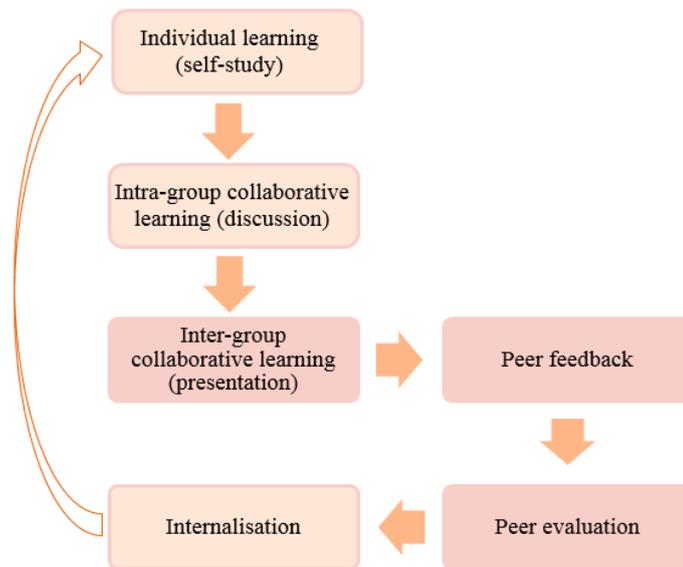
Figure 7: Four-step classroom instruction/learning model
(Adapted from TB # 2.1.3)

As explained in the brackets, by individual learning, the ED meant that students start to approach new knowledge and try to understand as much as possible first by themselves. Then students work in groups to share and discuss what they have learnt from their self-study, and co-seek solutions for any unsolved problems. After that, each group or its representatives present their collaborative findings to other groups or the whole class. The purpose of this, similar to that of intra-group discussion, is to share and co-construct knowledge, but with a wider learning community. At this stage, according to the ED, the rest of the class should be encouraged to listen, to compare with their own learning, and to make additional or critical comments. Meanwhile, teachers' roles are crucial at this point: organising, coordinating, facilitating, and inspiring students with further questions or ideas. The group presentation should then be evaluated by peer groups and the teacher. Finally, after the presentation, learning should come back to individual learners for them to reflect and assimilate the new knowledge. On such a basis, students should be able to identify the weak areas or gaps in their learning and subsequently take these as the starting points for next learning cycle. In this way, the process of knowledge construction carries on in an ongoing spiral manner, during which students "learn autonomously on their own and collaboratively with others" (ED.I1).

Overall, this model reflects the key principles that the ED proposed for the project, particularly the two key concepts of autonomy and collaboration. The model places students in the foreground conducting the actual learning – learning by themselves as well as within and across groups – with teachers in the background providing opportunities for such learning as well as coordinating and facilitating relevant activities. In this model, the increased students' control develops alongside the decreased control of teachers.

4.1.2.4 Four measures to support teachers' implementation

The ED took four concrete measures to secure the implementation of the project: establishing a group-based classroom management mechanism; team lesson planning; peer observation and evaluation; and collective open discussions and peer feedback giving (ED.I1& TB 2.1.4). Next, I will describe these measures in detail and identify as well as briefly comment on their relevance to control relinquishment both to teachers by management and to students by teachers.

Group-based classroom management using Performance Points

The first measure was group-based student management. According to the ED, students were divided into groups under the general principle of "homogeneous across groups, but heterogeneous within groups". As a result, students within a group were differentiated in terms of their personalities and academic grades (basically examination or test results), but the overall capabilities of groups were similar, so that it was fair when they competed with other groups. On such a basis, the ED suggested that students be seated in clusters as illustrated in Figure 8 rather than in rows as in traditional classrooms. Furthermore, students were numbered in each group, with the numbers roughly indicating their academic competences. In this way, the number that a student carried in a group served as his/her identification, which further determined where he or she was seated in the group. The connection between such identification and the positioning varied from class to class, but a common pattern was to seat the most able students in the middle. The ED believed such an arrangement to be beneficial in that it would make helping and seeking help more accessible physically. In Figure 8, for example, the Number 3s and 4s would be the most capable students in each group.

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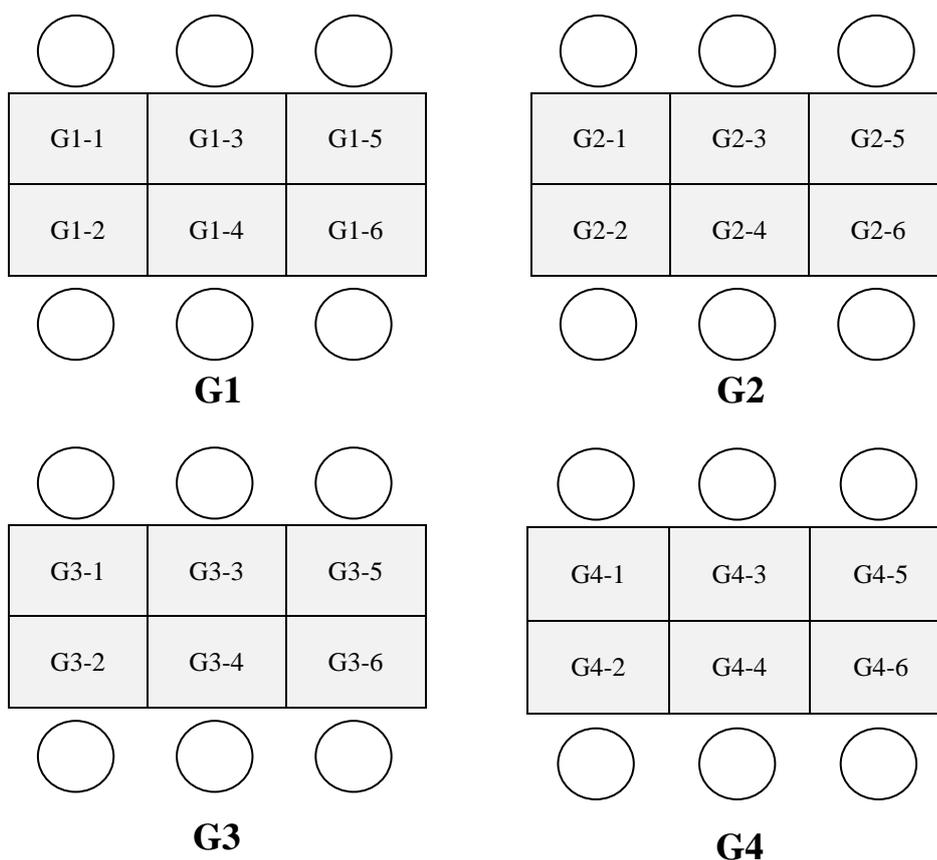
Figure 8: Group-based classroom management
(Adapted from the TB # 3.2)

To promote groupwork among students as well as to facilitate teachers' operation, the ED developed an awarding mechanism using what he called Performance Points (*cao xing fen*, and hereafter PFM Points for short). The performance involved various aspects of students' school life, including academic achievement in and out of classroom learning, study skills and habits, and observation of school and class norms. There were two types of PFM Points: individual points and group points, the former for individual performance in groups and the latter for group performance in the class. The ED explained in the interview that this was what he meant by "involving students in collaborative learning management". Such involvement would enhance students' participation and engagement in group activities, because "they want to beat other groups in terms of the Performance Points, thus they push and help each other as well as peer monitor their learning outcomes " (ED.I1).

According to the ED, groupwork was being promoted as a mode of learning in parallel with individual inquiry, which he referred to as autonomous learning. The

use of PFM Points served as the assessing system to motivate students and to record the learning process. The PFM Points were found subsequently much used in the teachers' practices, details of which will be reported in Section 4.2.

Team lesson planning using Learning Guide

The second measure concerned teacher lesson planning. The ED promoted teamwork and suggested a Learning Guide (LG) as a replacement for the traditional teaching plan. The rationale for such a collaborative manner was "to let teachers first understand collaborative learning by experiencing it and then transfer the experience to their classroom practice" (ED.I1). With regard to the LG, he shared his general guidelines as follows.

> By the name change, I am advocating for a shift of attention from teaching to learning. In other words, this is **not** a document that teachers use to show themselves what to do in class first, second and third, **but** one which should be written from the perspective of students, following which students are able to conduct their study autonomously on their own and/or collaboratively with others, to find answers and solve problems (emphasis in original). (D: IV1)

By this claim, the ED made his point very clear that the LG was primarily for students rather than teachers. Controversially, however, the ED also asserted that a good LG should be one that, in absence of its writer or designer, a relief teacher can pick up and easily run the lesson with. He also stressed two particular points that he viewed as crucial for the realisation of focusing on learning, and therefore should be reflected and written in the LG: one was opportunities for students' self-inquiry; and the other was feedback and comments as well as further questions and inspirations that teachers should prepare in advance on the basis of anticipated problems or difficulties that students might have in presentations.

With the general guidelines for the LG provided as above, the actual template looked simple and skeletal, containing only such basic information about a lesson as the year, class, topic, and date (See a sample in Appendix 13). It was noticed that signature areas were provided for the LG developer as well as a reviewer or an examiner. Regarding this, the ED explained that the LG should be produced a week before classroom adoption, during which the Head of Department (HoD)

would have a first review and make necessary amendments, and he himself would have a second review and give approval with signature. The purpose of this, according to the ED, was "to make sure the teachers [were] on the track leading towards more learner-focused teaching" (ED.I1).

The LG was meant to be a facilitating tool to assist teachers with the transition from a teaching- to a learning-focused mode. However, the scrutinizing process gave the sense that the ED lacked trust in teachers' ability to learn or explore the new (supposedly) way of teaching "autonomously on their own or collaboratively with others" as he advocated. In addition, its practicability was questionable when taking into account the frequency of its use, the number of people involved in the process as well as the time and energy required for proper review work.

Peer observation and evaluation using ACE Class Evaluation Standards

The third measure related to teacher peer observation and evaluation, which lasted for the whole semester and was divided into three phases. The first two phases required all staff members in each department to participate, while the third one involved only some. Specifically, in the first phase, every teacher should give an open lesson to have "a trial and a general understanding" of the promoted instruction model (ED.I1); and in the second, the process should be repeated, and two teachers should be selected from each subject group as department representatives, who would take part in the school-wide teaching competition in the third phase. When a teacher gave an open lesson, teachers from the same department were required to come to observe as well as evaluate the lesson using the ACE Class Evaluation Standards (see a sample in Appendix 9). Teachers were also encouraged to observe as many lessons as possible across subject areas.

The Standards consisted of ten criteria, examining a lesson from the following dimensions: the level of autonomy and collaboration shown by students; student enthusiasm; the level of class participation; the breadth and depth of students' thinking; student comportment; the effectiveness of teachers' explanation and their appraisal of students' performance in class; and the appropriate awarding of Performance Points to students. With ten marks set for each criterion, the marking column contained four ticking boxes showing "A10, B8, C6, D4", which

indicated the grades (A, B, C, D) and their approximate equivalent scores (10, 8, 6, 4) for teachers' performance in each dimension. The sum of the scores for the ten criteria was the evaluation result from one observer teacher, and the average of the results from all department colleagues was the final score of the lesson. By the score, teachers were ranked within their department; and it later transpired that the ranking was to some extent related to teachers' bonus income. My field notes reported that the Standards were used in each peer-observed open lesson and that the teachers were evaluated as well as ranked accordingly.

A critical review of these requirements regarding the peer observation and evaluation seems to indicate that, while these activities perhaps provided opportunities for teachers' collaborative learning about the school innovation, they did also contain the potential for peer pressure, which could be double-edged. In addition, while the Standards offered practical guidelines for teachers' practices, the income-affected element that was embedded might invite or encourage superficially criteria-pleasing practices, which were more likely to lead to remunerative benefits for teachers but were not genuinely constructive for the intended purpose of learner autonomy.

Collective open discussions and peer feedback giving

Following the peer observation and evaluation, the last measure that the ED took required teachers to collectively discuss the observed open lessons and to give peer feedback. Its purpose was for the teachers to share techniques and tips as well as discuss problems and difficulties that they encountered in their adoption of the four-step ACE Class Model.

A total of nine such sessions took place (during the data collection period), which ranged from forty minutes to over two hours. It was observed that the feedback session started with a self-reflection by the teachers who taught the open lessons, followed by comments and suggestions from peer colleagues in turn, and finished with a free discussion and the teachers' own concluding remarks ("reflections on the collective reflections", in the HoD's term). My field notes reported that the principal and the ED attended one session each – of which no prior notification was given – and made comments on the lessons under discussion.

The impact of these feedback sessions on teachers' practices, similar to that of the peer observation and evaluation, could be double-edged. Noticeably, while in some cases the feedback was inspirational and constructive, and the teachers commented on the discussions as good collegial learning opportunities, in some other cases tension and frustration were detected caused by various issues, such as power relationships among the teachers and individual personalities.

4.1.2.5 Pre-school teacher training workshops

In addition to the above-described four actions that the ED specified in the project booklet, he also led focused teacher training workshops prior to the start of the semester. According to the ED, the workshops took a total of eight hours (while twenty would be ideal) and were conducted in an experiential and collaborative manner. In contrast to the traditional trainer-led approach, he adopted a trainee-centred mode, handed over the control to the teachers, and let them learn by working "autonomously on their own or collaboratively with others" (ED.I1), in the same way as he advocated for ACE learning for students.

> After a brief introduction to the Model as well as illustration with images and classroom practice videos, I handed the workshop over to the teachers, asking them to read through the material by themselves, discuss in groups, and then present the discussion results to colleagues, like students presenting to the class. At the end of each presentation, the audience teachers were invited to make critical and additional comments. During the workshop interims, the teachers were encouraged to reflect and digest what they had learnt about the new model. (ED.I1)

This quotation shows the ED's belief in experiential as well as collaborative learning as approaches leading towards autonomy and his awareness of the transferability between teachers' learning and that of students.

In summary, this section has reported the LA-oriented school project running at Zia, which was mainly created, introduced and led by the ED. Key points that the ED held and was promoting through the project included:

- LA means students being the agents of their own learning, realised through their own internalisation;
- Students learn both autonomously and collaboratively so as to achieve

the optimum learning effect/efficiency;

- A spiral classroom instruction model starts with students' self-study, follows by collaborative learning through group discussion and presentation including critical peer feedback and evaluation, and finishes with learners' internalisation and reflection;
- Teachers' learning is by nature the same as that of students, both requiring autonomy and collaboration; on such a basis, the school took a series of actions to facilitate the teachers to implement the innovation project, comprising teacher training workshops, team lesson planning, peer observation and evaluation, and collective open discussion and peer feedback giving.

An overview of this section detects a dual nature in the ED's thinking about power and control relinquishment in the development of learner and teacher autonomy through collaborative learning. On the one hand, he claimed that students and teachers were the agents of their respective learning, and he encouraged teachers to shift control to students as well as giving teachers' control in his in-house training; on the other, he withheld his power and control from teachers in some aspects, such as himself being the ultimate examiner of the Learning Guide and using the Evaluation Standards to judge teachers' performance in implementing the classroom instruction model, of both of which he himself was the designer as well as decision maker.

So far I have presented the senior managers' interpretations of the notion of LA and the school innovation project that was intended to guide and facilitate teachers' practice in this regard. Next, I will shift the focus to the teachers' practices in this context.

4.2 Teachers' practices with features of learner control

This section reports in detail the teachers' LA-oriented practices in the context of the school innovation, both those that I observed and those that the teachers reported. Features regarding control taking are examined critically, through which the ways and extent of control shifts between teacher and student manifest. As to the data drawn on in this section, while the observations (O) are the key source, several other sources provide supplementary evidence, including the teacher interviews (I), the individual post-lesson discussions with me (PLD) and the departmental open discussions (OD), field notes (FN), and various documentary

materials used in the class such as teachers' lesson plans and students' work. The observation data display what the teachers did in the class, and these other data present reported-but-not-observed practices and relevant information that were necessary to make sense of what was observed.

Three types of practices were observed: Pre-lesson Presentation, Collaborative Group Learning and Student-led Peer Teaching. While Collaborative Group Learning was a common practice of all nine participant teachers, Pre-lesson Presentation was employed by eight of them (T7 was the exception), and Student-led Peer Teaching was adopted by three (T4, T5, T6). These were identified as LA-oriented because in these practices, students, rather than the teachers, were the main agents of the activity; therefore, they may be assumed to be exercising a certain degree of autonomy.

The following sections will present these practices one by one in detail. Classroom transcripts will be presented – in text or appendices – as necessary, following the conventions below. The lesson transcripts are verbatim with no attempt to correct grammatical slips by the speaker. The teachers' comments in post-lesson discussions were originally spoken in Chinese and subsequently translated by myself.

#1, #2	number of extract
01, 02	speaker turn
T	teacher
Ss	More than one student speaking
S1, S2	Unknown students
Zh, Ann	Initials of known students
[…]	Part of quotation omitted
[abc]	Guessed speech
[xxx]	Unintelligible speech
<…>	Overlapping speech
(…)	Interpreted speech
{…}	Narrative comments
Bold	Emphasis made by the speaker
Italics	Translation of Chinese speech
…, /, //, ///	Hesitation, Pauses (in seconds)

A summary will be given at the end of each practice.

4.2.1 Practice 1: Pre-lesson Presentation

Pre-lesson Presentation, in the applicable cases, was the first session with which the teacher started the lesson. In this session, individual student(s) made short presentations which had no or little direct relevance to the main content of the lessons, but were intended to be an opportunity for extra oral practice. The presentations took four different forms, summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Teachers' implementation of Pre-lesson Presentation

Patterns	Forms	Teachers
Pattern 1	Delivering a short speech of students' choice	T1, T3, T5, T8
Pattern 2	Reciting a poem chosen by students but approved by teacher	T6
Pattern 3	Performing textbook-based dialogue / conversation written by students	T9
Pattern 4	Reciting a (part of) text from textbook	T2, T4

I will now move on to present in detail the classroom operation of each pattern, along with which student control features will be identified and discussed.

Pattern 1. Delivering a short speech of students' choice (T1, T3, T5, T8)

The presentations in lessons of Teachers 1, 3, 5 and 8 represented the first pattern, in which the presenters delivered a short speech of their own choice. Student control was involved in the following aspects: presenters delivering a speech individually (T1, T3) or as a team (T5, T8); teaching vocabulary (T1, T3, T8); having an ask-and-answer session about the given speech (T1, T3, T5, T8); peer error correction or giving critical feedback (T3), and using PFM Points to evaluate the presentation (T1, T3).

The presentation in the first lesson of Teacher 1 provided an example. A boy student was standing in front of the class, while three words and phrases were written on the blackboard in English and Chinese. First, the boy delivered a short story entitled *my dream*. On finishing the speech, he explained the meanings of the three words/phrases, demonstrated the pronunciation, and asked the class to repeat the pronunciation three times. After that, the teacher asked the class if they had any question about the story; with no one responding, the teacher asked a

question and offered one PFM Point; hearing that, several students stood up immediately almost at the same time, competing to be the first respondent. The teacher eventually gave one mark to Group 1 (T1.L1.O). The following extract illustrates this.

Observation Extract #1(T1.L1.O)

01	S1	{<u>00:00</u> S1 standing in the front; "sick 体弱多病的, cheer up 鼓励, and patient 病人" were written on the blackboard.} [xxx] Today is October the 11th. I will tell you a story, my dream. Everyone has a dream, my dream is to be a doctor […] {content omitted} To be a doctor is really great. I think my dream will come true one day. 下面教大家几个词， sick是一个形容词，它的意思是体弱多病的，cheer up 是个词组，是鼓励的意思，patient是病人，是个名词。 *Sick is an adjective, its meaning is physically weak and often ill, cheer up is a phrase, meaning encourage, patient is sick people, it's a noun.* Sick, sick, sick, one two, three.
02	Ss	sick, sick, sick.
03	S1	cheer up, cheer up, cheer up.
04	Ss	cheer up, cheer up, cheer up
05	S1	patient, patient, patient.
06	Ss	patient, patient, patient.
06	S1	My speech is over. Thank you. {Ss clap hands.}
07	T	Does anyone have any question? {T walks to the front.} / Does anybody have a question? / No? I have a question? What is Alan's dream? What is Alan's dream? /// {no response} One point {T signals one point with her finger.} **What is Alan's dream?** {T's voice rises up}. Stand up and tell me what is Alan's dream?
08	Ss	To be a doctor. {Several ss stand up immediately and yell out the answer.}
09	T	Ok, sit down, please. I think Group 1 is [the first]. {T writes 1, 2, 3, 4 on the blackboard, representing Group 1, 2, 3, 4, and gives one point to Group 1.} Ok, class begins. <u>01:55</u>

A similar practice was found in Teacher 1's three other lessons, with a minor difference in the way of using PFM Points. While in her first lesson, the teacher made the decision to give one mark to the group recognised as the quickest respondent; in the following lessons, a student went up to the front and undertook the role as teacher assistant (T1.L2/3/4.O). In the post-lesson discussion with Teacher 1, she reported another technique that she used previously – getting the audience to "point out the presenter's strengths and weaknesses" (T1.L1.PLD). The topic and source of the presentation was "students' own choice, from any

resources available, such as out-of-class readings or reference books supplementary to textbook learning" (T1.L1.PLD).

Teacher 3's way was similar to Teacher1's, in that it also included the speech, the vocabulary and the ask-and-answer session. The role of the audience giving critical comments to the presenter, which was reported by Teacher 1, was observed in Teacher 3's lesson. Specifically, after the presenter finished, she asked, "In the process, what problems did you see?" Three students responded to that, and pointed out such grammatical mistakes as "I like oranges best, not I best like oranges". Unlike the previous situation, the last student respondent drew attention to a problem regarding the activity procedures: although he pointed out that the presenter did well with the speech, he forgot to "teach the new words" which he had written on the board. In response to this comment, the teacher reminded the class to bear this in mind in the future. (T3.L1.O, see Observation Extract #2 in Appendix 14).

While in lessons of Teachers 1 and 3, the presenter was one single student, Teachers 5 and 8 employed team presentation in this session. In Teacher 8's first lesson, two students appeared in the front: one the presenter and the other a facilitator. Similar to what was seen in Teacher 1's lesson, four words/phrases were already written on the board beforehand. The facilitating student welcomed the presenter and invited him to teach the class the new words before giving the speech. The presenter then read the words aloud and the class read after him. After that the presenter delivered a short speech about a TV programme, during which the teacher wrote "prefer to" on the board when this phrase was heard in the speech. Following the speech, the facilitator led the ask-and-answer session and also explained the meaning of the phrase "prefer to" (T8.L1.O, see Observation Extract #3 in Appendix 14).

Teacher 5 also utilised team presenting, but differed from Teacher 8 in that she involved a third student for the ask-and-answer session. Specifically, while the facilitator asked the class to raise questions about the speech, the third student went up to the front and wrote in full on the blackboard the questions which were raised (T5.L2.O).

Pattern 2. Reciting (part of) a text from textbook (T2, T4)

The pre-lesson presentations in the lessons of Teachers 2 and 4 represented this pattern, in which the presenters recited (part of) a text from the textbook. In these sessions, students of both teachers were involved in selecting the presenters and the texts, and peer error correction. In this way, they can be seen to have exercised some degree of control in preparing the activity.

In Teacher 2's first observed lesson, she started with an informal chat with the class, in which she initiated such simple questions as "which group?", "which number?" and "which passage?" To the questions, the class responded animatedly by calling out different numbers. Consequently, Student 4 from Group 6 was chosen, and went up to the front and recited a passage starting with "Do you remember Jenny Ian" (T2.L1.O). About the text, Teacher 2 encouraged the presenter to "flexibly change forms as necessary into his own words" (T2.L1.PLD). Meanwhile, the class were required to "listen attentively, compare with what's in their own memory, and spot any mistakes in the reciting and suggest corrections", which was "a routine practice, so no need to say each time" (T2.L1.PLD). Extract #4 illustrates this.

Observation Extract #4 (T2.L1.O)

1	T	Just now a few of you said Group 1 and Group 6, only few of them recited the text. Now, I just wanna to choose one. Group 1 and 6, which one?
2	Ss	One, one < six, six, six >. {ss yelling different numbers.}
3	T	Ok, Group 6. Number ---
4	Ss	Three three three <four four four four>. {ss yelling different numbers.}
5	T	[xxx] has done [xxx] {T bends to check with a student in the front.}
6	Ss	Four four four {ss yelling}
7	T	Ok Four. No. 4. Welcome. {ss clap hands; a boy student comes to the front.} Which passage?
8	Ss	[xxx] {ss giving T suggestions}
9	T	Ok the newest.
10	Ss	[xxx] {ss yelling}
11	T	Oh Jenny Ian. Do you remember? [T giving prompt to start] Do you remember Jenny Ian ---
12	Ss	[xxx] {ss chorus the text}
13	T	Shiiiiiii {T signs to ss to stop to listen to the presenter}

14   S1   Do you remember […] {the boy reciting the text}

Although taking the same form of text-reciting, Teacher 4's operation differed from that of Teacher 2. The first difference related to the way of selecting the presenters and the texts, decisions on which were made "by lots" – Teacher 4 asked a student to draw numbers from the box which she provided (T4.L1.O), while, as shown above, Teacher 2 verbally negotiated the decisions with students in an informal manner (T2.L1.O). The second difference dealt with accuracy of the recitation – Teacher 4 asked the presenters to "recite as accurately as possible" (T4.L1.PLD) while Teacher 2 claimed she encouraged "free use of the learnt language" (T2.L1.PLD). The third difference was that Teacher 4 gave PFM Points to groups whose members contributed valid answers in the peer error correction (T4.L1.O).

Pattern 3. Performing a textbook-based dialogue / conversation written by students (T9)

The presentations in Teacher 9's two observed lessons represented this pattern, in which students performed a dialogue (T9.L1.O) and a conversation (T9.L2.O) that they had written by themselves on the basis of the learnt units (T9.L2.PLD). In addition to creating the material, students were also involved into evaluating the presentation. This was observed in Teacher 9's second lesson, when the whole class were asked to suggest PFM Points (see Section 4.1.2.4) for the presentation.

As observed, three students stood in the front, having the conversation in the manner of a role play. The students' voices were hardly audible, and the conversation was short. Shortly after the conversation started, one student was stuck, unable to carry on the conversation. The other two looked at a loss, and the teacher checked with them that they could not carry on and then dismissed them. The teacher then asked the class for their opinions as to how many PFM Points should be given to the presenters. The class called out different answers and the teacher wrote 1.5 on the board (T9.L2.O).

Pattern 4. Reciting a poem chosen by students but approved by teacher (T6)

The presentation in Teacher 6's first lesson represented this pattern, in which a

student recited a poem. The poem was "chosen by the student himself, but examined and approved by the teacher"; and the presenter was "trained before presenting" (T6.L1.PLD). That meant, as the teacher elaborated, after the presenter had selected the material, she reviewed it "to make sure the chosen material was appropriate to the presenter's ability"; and then she "checked the student's pronunciation and demonstrated to him the right intonation, so that he could practise further accordingly to make a good presentation" (T6.L1.PLD). The observed session lasted almost 10 minutes, which was unusual in comparison with the range of two to five minutes spent on all the other presentations. Specifically, what was observed was reported as follows in the field notes.

- (0:00 - 2:30) the teacher presenting and explaining "the requirements for recitation" showed on the PowerPoint; (T6.L1.PPT)
- (2:30 - 3:19) a student reciting a poem in the front;
- (3:19 - 5:43) the teacher inviting the class to make comments on the boy's reciting;
- (5:43 - 6:35) the teacher asking students' opinions about the quality of the boy's work against the requirements checklist on the PowerPoint;
- (6:35- 9:38) the teacher leading a discussion of how to recite the last sentence 'We're a great team' in the right intonation. (T6.L1.O)

A close examination of this session disclosed some reservation in the teacher's relinquishing control to students. First, the teacher took a leading role in the process except for the presenter's actual recitation part, while comments and responses from the whole class were minimal, mainly short utterances such as single words or phrases (e.g., "good", "so-so"). Second, in selecting the material, the student was allowed to choose, but the teacher was the ultimate decision-maker. Third, the teacher trained the presenter beforehand and judged him afterwards, both according to the standards that she herself created and presented to the class. As a result, given the actual control that students obtained in this presentation versus the amount of time taken, this session appeared an example in which the teacher released very limited genuine control to students.

Summary of Pre-lesson Presentation

So far, I have presented a close look at each individual teacher's classroom implementation of the pre-lesson presentation. In short, ample evidence showed

that the teachers gave control to students in various ways. Table 6 provides a summary.

Table 6: Student control in Pre-lesson Presentation

Students' involvement	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T8	T9
Individual presenting	√	√	√	√		√		
Team presenting					√		√	√
Deciding on presenters		√		√				
Deciding on materials	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Peer teaching vocabulary	√		√			√		
Ask & answer about the presentation	√		√		√	√		
Peer error correction / critical comments	√	√	√	√				
Evaluating presentation in PFM Points	√							√

However, there was also evidence showing restrictions to genuine control shift to students, as exemplified by Teacher 6's session. Furthermore, while the teachers released control to students in some common areas as displayed in the table, individual teachers exhibited diversity in their specific ways of operation. Taking students' involvement in material selection for example, Teachers 1, 3, 5 and 8 relinquished full control to students for a free choice, while Teacher 6 allowed some choices for students but retained much of the control for herself as the ultimate authority. Among the other three teachers who based the presentations on textbooks, a measure of control shift was shown in Teacher 9's session in the fact that students wrote their own dialogues/conversations, and in Teacher 2's session in that students were invited to nominate the presenter and that the presenter was allowed to transform the text into his own words. There seemed to be less space for choice in Teacher 4's case in lot-drawing and an accurate retelling/reciting of the original text. Another example can be seen from student involvement in evaluating the presentation: while some teachers (T2, T3, T4) invited students' critical comments, Teacher 9 asked students to suggest PFM Points, and Teacher 1 used both.

Now I will move on to the next LA-oriented practice: Collaborative Group Learning.

4.2.2 Practice 2: Collaborative Group Learning

Collaborative Group Learning refers to teachers' implementation of the four-step classroom instruction model that the ED suggested for the innovation project. As illustrated in Figure 7 in Section 4.1.2.3, the model incorporated six aspects of learning: individual self-study, group discussion, presentation, feedback giving, evaluation, and internalisation. Findings in this section, therefore, encompass teachers' practices in relation to all these aspects, rather than just groupwork itself. Defined as such, it can be said that Collaborative Group Learning was involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in all the 22 lessons observed. However, this section discusses 19 of them, while the other three are left for Section 4.2.3 due to their more striking features regarding student-led teaching.

The nine teachers' implementation of the model differed considerably. Altogether, 33 activities were identified (see Appendix 15), which appeared in eleven patterns according to the aspects suggested in ED's model. Table 7 provides an overview. Sequencing the patterns takes into consideration the number of aspects concerned and the principle of keeping similar practices adjacent for the ease of explaining.

Table 7: Teachers' implementation of Collaborative Group Learning

Patterns	Indi	Dis	Pre	Fdbk	Eva	Int	Teachers
Pattern 1	√	√	√	√	√	√	T1
Pattern 2	√	√		√	√	√	T2
Pattern 3		√	√		√	√	T5
Pattern 4	√	√	√				T1, T2, T8
Pattern 5		√	√		√		T1, T2, T3, T8, T9
Pattern 6		√	√				T1, T3, T7, T8, T9
Pattern 7			√	√	√		T3
Pattern 8			√				T3
Pattern 9	√		√		√		T1, T5, T7, T8
Pattern 10			√		√		T4, T6
Pattern 11		√					T6

[Note: Indi=individual self-study; Dis=discussion; Pre=presentation; Fdbk=feedback; Eva=evaluation; Int=internalisation]

Next, I will present these patterns in detail.

Pattern 1

Pattern 1 was a general reflection of the ED's model: it involved all the six aspects and followed its procedure. Part of Teacher 1's fourth lesson (T1.L1.O, 21:39-41:47) illustrates this pattern.

The goals of the lesson were "to talk about and compare life styles", and "to retell the text according to key points" (T1.L4.LG). To start with, students were asked to study individually, searching from the text for information about "good and bad habits of Wang Le and Du Fei" (T1.L1.PPT). Then, they were instructed to discuss in groups and write down the key points on the allocated small white board, based on which group representatives (two from each group, she emphasised) were to give an oral presentation. At the end of the presentations, the teacher asked if anyone spotted any mistakes or had additional points to give, upon which one student pointed out a grammar problem, saying "habits" not "habit". Following that, the teacher asked the class which groups did better in their presentations. In response, students called out different numbers, and the teacher said, "I think so, Groups 2 and 4 did a better job". As a result, she gave three PFM Points to Groups 2 and 4, and two to Groups 1 and 3. After that, the teacher presented the key points she summarised, and then led the class review, following which she asked them to "have a digestion" (*xiao hua yi xia*) of the points and to practise retelling the text. The lesson ended with two students nominated by the teacher demonstrating the text-retelling. (T1.L4.O)

The above lesson mirrored the six aspects suggested in the school model: respectively, "self-study" in students' individual information searching, "intra-group learning" in group discussion and gathering the information, "inter-group learning" in group presentations, "peer feedback" in a student spotting a grammar mistake, "evaluation" in the class giving opinions on the presentation performance, and "internalisation" in the class digesting the summarised points and practising retelling. Overall, this lesson can be taken as an example of fully fulfilling the ED's model. It is worth noting that this was the only example for this complete pattern identified from the 22 lessons observed, and that this was

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one of the showcase lessons for the teaching competition in the third phase of the school-wide peer observation and evaluation (see Section 4.1.2.4).

Pattern 2

Compared with Pattern 1 which complied largely with the ED's model, Pattern Two demonstrated a more flexible and creative use of the model: it did not include all the elements in the model (presentation was absent) but contained other elements of student involvement beyond the model (e.g., an authentic teacher-student social chat). Teacher 2's second lesson illustrates this pattern.

The goal for this lesson was "to use simple past tense to talk about the past" (T2.L2.LG). The lesson comprised the following steps:

1) a teacher-students warm-up chat (from "the weather today" to "the weather yesterday" then to "the school event yesterday");
2) student self-study (three tasks on LG about base verbs, past verbs, and time phrases) and self-checking answers;
3) students talking first in groups (about their past experiences using the time phrases just written) then with the teacher (about their life two years before);
4) students writing individually key sentences followed by teacher nominating some to share with the class;
5) teacher leading a discussion with students about the writing outline;
6) students individually writing the first draft and self-editing;
7) students exchanging writing with group members for peer evaluation and editing (marking out their good sentences / expressions as well as less satisfactory ones and suggesting correction);
8) students reading the sample writing written by and about the teacher herself;
9) students revising their work to produce the second draft to be submitted for teacher feedback. (T2.L2.O)

Described as above, while steps 1 to 7 were observed in operation, steps 8 and 9 were absent in class due to insufficient time. Nevertheless, they were manifested in the teacher's instruction for homework (T2.L2.O), and students' writings which were collected afterwards. Referring to the ED's model, five aspects were involved: individual work (working on the LG, writing key sentences and the first

draft), discussion (sharing key sentences), peer-feedback (peer-editing), evaluation (marking out good expressions), and internalisation (redrafting on the basis of peer feedback and teacher's sample writing). While group presentation was absent in this lesson, there were more "self-" features, for example, self-checking, drafting and editing.

Three other features were identified as presumably LA-supportive. Firstly, when control was shifted to students, teacher guidance and support were provided throughout the lesson, concerning both content and language forms. Regarding the content, Teacher 2 guided the conversation from a broad talk about the past (the warm-up chat) to the targeted writing topic (primary school life). Respecting language forms, she provided support at different levels: lexical (verbs and time expressions), syntactic (key sentences), structural (writing outline), and discoursal (the sample writing). Secondly, the warm-up chat at the start of the lesson was real-life-based (on weather and the latest school event), inviting authentic communication. Thirdly, the sample writing written by the teacher about her own story was a sign that, by doing the same work with students and sharing her experience with them, the teacher relinquished her position as an authority figure to a peer learner level.

Meanwhile, an episode showed the teacher's interruption and interference after having transferred control to students. It occurred after the teacher had given students clear instruction for writing the first draft ("OK, now please write"), she continued talking and giving students further instructions and reminders, such as "don't haste to write; reorganise your thinking" (see Observation Extract #5 in Appendix 14). This episode was found to deviate from Teacher 2's avowed style because this (continuing to instruct students while they were at work) was a practice which she spotted from Teacher 5's lesson and later commented on as LA-hindering at the departmental open discussion (OD1).

Pattern 3

This pattern involved four of the six aspects in the ED's model: discussion, presentation, evaluation and internalization, exemplified by an episode from Teacher 5's second lesson (T5.L2.O, 35:38-45:35).

The episode dealt with a "relay writing" task, using a conditional structure. Specifically, the task showed as "Maybe I will become a singer. If I become a singer, I will…" (T5.L2.PPT). It started with the teacher handing out each group a piece of paper with the structure and spaces for students to fill in, along with the instruction "Now, game time, one sentence from each; the first one to decide the occupation; three minutes; five points". Students then worked in groups, talking, writing, and passing on the worksheet from one to another, during which the teacher patrolled checking group by group. Three minutes later, she asked the class to stop to "show the group product". In response, a representative from each group read aloud to the class a series of "if…I will" sentences, at some of which the class laughed heartily (e.g., "If I'm a famous actor, I will find a beautiful girlfriend"). All the four groups presented their work. Subsequently, the teacher expressed her satisfaction with the presentations, and awarded each group five PFM Points. After that, the teacher assigned homework, asking students to "digest" (*xiao hua*) the structure and write their own plans using "if… will". (T5.L2.O)

In this episode, students' agency was fully exercised in the discussion and presentation phases, scaffolded by the worksheets that the teacher provided. However, evaluation appeared only in the form of the teacher recognising students' performance by PFM Points, in which she took sole control with no student involvement. The homework served as the opportunity for students to internalise the learnt structure and further construct with language of personal relevance.

Pattern 4

Pattern 4 started with individual study, followed by group work, and ended with presentation. The pattern was reflected in three activities by three teachers (T1, T2, T8). Notably, all the three teachers labelled the activities explicitly with phrases indicating a "self" nature. Table 8 displays the details regarding language foci and specific ways in which students exercised agency and there was LA potential, for example, in individually and/or collaboratively searching information and figuring out meanings (T1), practising using the given patterns (T2), and identifying and solving problems (T8).

Table 8: Teachers' practices with Collaborative Group Learning Pattern 4

T	Activity labels	Language content	Student actions
T1	self-study (*zi zhu xue xi*)	ten phrases in the text	(phrases shown on PPT in English) Ss read the text silently searching and marking; read aloud to memorise; checked memorisation with group members; T nominated 4 group representatives to check pronunciation and meanings. (T1.L4.O)
T2	talk to yourself	How often…? What's your favourite…?	(sentence patterns and phrases shown on PPT) Ss practised first individually, then with partners; T nominated 3 pairs to demonstrate. (T2.L1.O)
T8	autonomous learning, collaborative inquiry (*zi zhu xue xi, he zuo tan jiu*)	key and difficult points (*zhong nan dian*) in the text	(3 prompt questions shown on PPT) Ss worked silently by themselves for 7 minutes, discussed in groups for 3 minutes, and then group representatives reported in turns, basically in Chinese. (T8.L1.O)

Despite the opportunities provided, limitations were detected in the activities in relation to space encouraging (or allowed for) independent thinking and free language use. For instance, in the nine minutes spent in Teacher 1's session (T1.L1.O: 0352-1501), what students did was to locate, to work out, and to memorise the Chinese meanings of ten phrases in the text (e.g., *with the help of*). The whole process involved only limited free target language use. Further evidence was seen in Teacher 8's session. In the session, students were instructed to find their own "key and difficult points", yet three "prompted" questions were given on PowerPoint; as a result, what students actually discussed and reported were just the three "prompted" by the teacher. In addition, the questions were more of a discourse analysis nature than of language use ("*What type of speech was used in the text? What verb forms were used in the text, and why? How was the cohesion of the text achieved?*") (T8.L1.PPT, originally in Chinese). This made the questions too challenging for Year 8 students to exercise much autonomy in actually using the target language. In comparison with Teachers 1 and 8, Teacher 2 allowed in her session more (although not a great deal) language use of personal relevance, as shown in the following PowerPoint slide:

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(T2.L1.PPT)

Noticeably, Teacher 2's technique of "talk to yourself" was used repeatedly (seen at the beginning of the lesson on the topic of "dorm life"), which demonstrated consistency with the "self" nature in her second lesson observed, as has been reported earlier in Pattern 2.

Patterns 5 and 6

Patterns 5 and 6 featured the use of discussion and presentation, with the former also involving evaluation in the form of PFM Points. Among all patterns, these appeared most commonly-used, with Pattern 5 in five activities by five teachers (T1, T2, T3, T8, T9), and Pattern 6 in ten activities of five teachers (T1, T3, T7, T8, T9) (see activity detail in Appendix 16). Table 9 summarises the activities involved and their respective language features.

Table 9: Teachers' practices with Collaborative Group Learning Patterns 5 & 6

	Types of activity	Language features	Teacher / Lesson
1	Making a story	setting of the story given in Chinese	T8.L1
2	Making a survey	structures provided; ideas to be surveyed	T1.L3; T2.L1; T9.L2
3	Describing a picture	structures provided; ideas shown in picture	T9.L1; T9.L2
4	Filling & talking about a table/chart	structures provided; ideas to be found in text	T1.L2; T7.L1
5	Practising sentence patterns	structures provided; textbook-based;	T1.L3; T3.L2; T9.L1
6	Searching phrases	textbook-based; lexical-level output	T1.L1
7	Discussing/summarising grammar rules	textbook-based; output in Chinese	T3.L2; T8.L1; T1.L3

A close examination of these activities discovered features supporting or inhibiting LA development. Four issues are discussed: space for language autonomy; facilitating tools adopted; conflict between activities; and ways of presentation and evaluation.

To start, some activities contained more space than others for free thinking and target language using. This can be seen from the language features identified in the table. For example, the story-making in Teacher 8's first lesson (Type 1) required students to "imagine the next episode of *Young Lives*, and finish the newspaper article", for which they were encouraged to "discuss and collaborate, imagine boldly, and design the plot", with some suggestions given in Chinese (T8.L1.O. See Observation Extract #6 in Appendix 14). By contrast, the question for discussion in Teacher 3's second lesson (Type 7) was a simple grammar rule: "Regarding the sentence structure *I have…*, what is the rule for changing a statement to a yes/no question" (see Observation Extract #7 in Appendix 14). Obviously, the topic in Teacher 8's lesson lent itself more to discussion than that in Teacher 3's.

During the discussions, artefacts of various kinds were used, such as handed-out worksheets and tables or charts on PowerPoint slides. While most of these tools mediated the discussions (e.g., the survey template in Teacher 2's second lesson) (see left hand image below), some seemed to be over-helpful and perhaps inhibited students from independent thinking and information exchanging with peers. An example of the latter was seen in a PowerPoint slide in Teacher 8's first lesson (see right hand image below). In the lesson, students were instructed to "collaborate in groups to explain to each other (*xiao zu he zuo, hu xiang jiang jie*)" rules for direct/indirect speech transition. However, both the rules and examples were shown on the PowerPoint, which ended up with students merely reading to each other what was written on the screen (T8.L1.O).

Activity	Every day	Once or twice a day	Three or four times a day
watch TV			
surf the Internet			
read English books			
go to the movies			
go shopping			
exercise			

do a freetime activity survey

Talk about the results of the survey in turns

Review 语 法

小组合作，互相讲解。3分钟
1、直接引语与间接引语的概念：
直接引语：说话人直接引用别人的原话。
例：Mary said, "I'm late." 玛莉说："我迟到了"。
间接引语：说话人用自己的话把别人的意思转述出来。
例：Mary said she was late. 玛莉说她迟到了。
2、直接引语变间接引语时要注意：
（1）变间接引语时根据意思改变人称：
例：He said, "I don't like junk food."
He said he didn't like junk food.
（2）间接引语中从句的谓语要与主句的谓语时态一致。

(T2.L1.PPT)   (T8.L1.PPT).

The conflict between activities concerned discussion and presentation. Specifically, it was observed that some discussions, while well in progress, were terminated by the teachers to 'give way' to subsequent presentations, evidence found in two lessons (T8.L1; T9.L2). In both lessons, students' request for more time for discussion was turned down, and the lesson moved on under the procedure established, and insisted on, by the teachers. Extract #8 illustrates this:

Observation Extract #8

01   T   3201 {T gives out worksheets; Ss work in groups on the survey} 3718 ok stop.

02   Ss   No, no, no. No! 老师，再给2分钟时间，再给2分钟时间 *teacher, give 2 more minutes. Give 2 more minutes, please.* {Ss ask T keenly for more time.}

03   T   3737 {T makes a gesture signing stop.}不写了 不写了 根据你调查的情况 作汇报 *no more writing, no more writing. Make a report according to your survey results* {Ss looked reluctant to stop} **Stop! Stop!** (T9.L2.O)

The field notes on the above lesson reported that the students were well engaged in the groupwork but were stopped strongly by the teacher to present their incomplete work (T9.L2.FN). There was the sense of a control competition between the teachers and the students in terms of their preferred activity at the time, particularly when the lesson schedule was tight.

Following the discussions, outcomes were presented in various ways, involving oral report or demonstration (T1; T2; T3; T8; T9) and writing on the blackboard followed by oral presentation (T1) by individuals or teams/pairs. Peer helping during presenting was seen in two cases in the second and third lessons of Teacher 1. In both cases, it was observed that, while group representatives were writing the

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group discussion results on the board (key words and rules for comparatives, respectively), members of the same group were continuing to search and pass on additional information to those who were writing. (T1.L1/2.O)

Pattern 5 involved evaluation, in the form of awarding PFM Points to group work outcomes that were presented. The awarding role was taken mostly by the teachers (T1, T3, T8, T9), except for Teacher 2, who asked students to give their opinions on the survey report and to suggest a mark (T2.L1.O).

Patterns 7 and 8

Patterns 7 and 8 highlighted the presentation phase. The difference between the two lay in that, in Patter 7, the presentation was also followed by students' giving additional peer comments and the teacher awarding PFM Points to acknowledge the presented work. Pattern 8 (T3.L3) was referred to by the teacher as "group showing time" (*zhan shi shi jian*), in which six pairs of students (representing six groups) took turns to role play a conversation about shopping. Noticeably, this lesson where Pattern 8 was involved was Teacher 3's showcase lesson in the school teaching competition (as was Teacher 1's fourth lesson discussed in Pattern 1). In comparison, Pattern 7 appeared more complicated and disclosed more LA-related issues, described and discussed as follows.

The session was a group presentation on plural noun rules, which took place at the start of her first observed lesson (T3.L1), and lasted for approximately 15 minutes. The activity was conducted in four steps. First, two or three students from each group wrote the grammar rules on their "group territory" (the ED's term, referring to a fixed area of the board allocated for each group with group members' names on top), with one mainly writing and the others assisting with resources/content. Next, a different group representative went up to their "territory" to lead the class review of the rules with explanations and/or examples as necessary – termed by Teacher 3 as the "presenting/showing" (*zhan shi*) session. After that, members from other groups were invited to make additional or critical comments – termed as the "questioning" session. In the end, the teacher awarded the contributing groups PFM Points when the comments were judged by the teacher as valid (T3.L1.O) (see transcripts in Observation Extract #9 in

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Appendix 14).

A close look at this episode exposed the following issues in relation to the development of LA: language in use, group work routines, ways of presenting, and lesson agenda. First of all, autonomous target language use in this episode was minimal. The overall working language (written and spoken, the teacher and students) was Chinese, with English use limited to the actual words/examples being presented and explained. Next, the session showed a strongly formal nature. Evidence was seen in formulaic remarks (in Chinese) for opening (*"X zu zhan shi"*: Group X is to present), closing (*"X zu zhan shi wan bi"*: So much for Group X's report), and making an additional point (*"X zu bu chong"*: Group X has a point to add). Also seen were particular teacher instructions signalling student actions for group work. For example, on hearing the teacher's words "Now, discuss", students responded quickly with all heads huddled closely together; when the presenting session was to start, the three groups at the back of the classroom flocked to the front and crouched down on the ground; and when one group was presenting, representatives of other groups formed a queue for their turns (T3.L1.O). These were worth noting because they were techniques that the ED had introduced as "group work classroom operational tips" for teachers to use when necessary (TB. #7.8). An episode in the middle of the presentation observed a 'tug-of-war' between the teacher and the third presenter in relation to the way of presenting, which showed that, while having released control to the student to do the presentation, the teacher intervened in the process and insisted that the student present in the way she required. Extract #10 illustrates this:

Observation Extract #10

01	T	Ok, now 岳组*Group Yue*，[…] Now 他们已经说过两遍了*they've presented for two times*，now this time, [xxx], you'd better tell us without looking at the blackboard. Do you understand?
02	S4	Yes. {S4 was about to start }.>
03	T	You'd better tell us without looking at the blackboard. **Without**, without looking at the blackboard {T using gestures to illustrate the idea not to look at the blackboard.}. You just look at us. Yes↑ Ok, go. {S4 turned to the blackboard and was to start.}
04	T	**Don't,** don't look at the blackboard {T's voice raised sharply}. Look at us. Yes↑ Ok. **Look at us.**

05	S4	Er, er {S4, still looking at the blackboard, was starting to read.}
06	T	**No. Without.** {T using gestures to illustrate the idea not to look at the blackboard; ss laugh.} 不要看黑板 *Don't look at the blackboard.* Yes↑ Ok. Go.
06	S4	岳组展示 *Group Yue is to present [...]*{S4 ignores T's instruction and starts to read from blackboard.}
07	T	**No, don't look at the blackboard.** Don't look at the blackboard. **Just** look at us.
08	S4	单数可数名词变复数是加s *singular countable nouns change plural, add s* […] {S4 finally moves his eyes away from the blackboard and faces the class talking, but shortly gets stuck and turns back again reading from the blackboard. Ss laugh and laugh.}
09	T	Now don't look at the blackboard.
10	S4	然后复数不以s结尾的 […] *then with the ones without s [...]* { ignoring T's insistence, S4 continues to read from the blackboard. }

Another episode showed a conflict in the class agenda when the teacher hastened to move on while students were expecting their turns to do the presentations. Specifically, there were six groups, all of whom wrote their rules on the board; therefore, it was assumed that the presenting procedure would run for six times. However, the teacher terminated the activity after only three group presentations, despite the fourth group standing in the aisle waiting for their turn. (T3.L1.O)

From the issues discussed above, Pattern 7 presented an example that demonstrated strong group routines but exposed several elements inhibiting genuine student control.

Patterns 9 and 10

Patterns 9 and 10 featured the use of PFM Points awarded to groups as collective recognition for individually presented work. The difference between the two was that the individual study session was present in the lessons involving Pattern 9 but invisible in those involving Pattern 10. Noticeably, among all the patterns identified (see Table 7 at the beginning of Section 4.2.2), Pattern 9 was the second most widely-used one, seen in lessons of four teachers (T1, T5, T7, T8).

An episode in Teacher 1's first lesson observed (T1.L1.O, 03:52-07:46) illustrates Pattern 9. The activity in the episode was a gap-filling exercise about using the

given adjectives (see activity detail in Appendix 16). First, Teacher 1 showed the exercise on the PowerPoint, and gave the instruction: "Now I give you one minute to finish the exercise, to review the four words". Then, students worked individually on the task in silence. A minute later, the teacher said, "Ok, each sentence for each group." Following that, she nominated groups (e.g., "Group 3") to give answers for each sentence, and then acknowledged the correct answers with PFM Points to the groups involved. (T1.L1.O)

Pattern 10 is illustrated by part of Teacher 4's first lesson, which was termed as "self-directed study" (T4.L1.LG), but the self-study was absent during the actual observation. The LG instruction for this activity was "to summarise the phrases on pages 19 to 20, and write them on the board by groups". The board was seen full of English phrases in each "group territory" with group members' names written on the top (as in Teacher 3's class). The teacher went over each group's phrases with the class, during which she ticked the good ones with her verbal comment ("this is a good one"), corrected the inaccurate ones against what was in the book (e.g. "on weekends, not weekend"), and crossed out the ones beyond the specified pages (e.g., "talk about, this is a phrase, but not on these two pages; I asked you to review pages 19 to 20; ignore this one"). On completion of that, the teacher gave two PFM Points to each group. (T3.L1.O)

Two issues are worth noting with these two patterns: first, the presented work was individual products, but the PFM Points were given to groups; second, although PFM Points were adopted as an evaluative and awarding tool to acknowledge students' learning outcomes, in both cases the teachers were the sole judgement- and decision-makers showing neither intention nor action for student involvement.

Pattern 11

Pattern 11 is exemplified by an episode in Teacher 6's first lesson, in which no groupwork did actually take place, but a simple teacher instruction suggesting so. Specifically, the teacher showed to students seven questions on the PowerPoint, followed by the instruction "discuss in your groups". However, this was not followed by any students' action but 30 seconds of silence, and then the teacher moved on with her leading talk to the whole class, which was her most normal

style throughout the lesson (T6.L1.O, see Observation Extract #11 in Appendix 14)

Compared with patterns under this category, Pattern 11 in effect contained no genuine collaborative learning or student control of any kind, but was merely the teacher's 'lip service' signalling a student activity.

Summary of Collaborative Group Learning

This section has reported teachers' adoption of the Collaborative Group Learning model that the school suggested. Key findings are summarised as follows:

- The model was found more or less used in all the lessons observed (19 analysed in this section), involving all the nine teachers.
- 33 activities (Appendix 15) were identified as using the ED's model, manifested in 11 patterns according to the LA-oriented aspects involved (Table 7), student control descending from 1 to 11 (except Pattern 2).
- The nine teachers' involvement with the 11 patterns is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Teachers' involvement with patterns

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Patterns	1, 4, 5, 6, 9	2, 4, 5	5, 6, 7, 8	10	3, 9	10, 11	6, 9	3, 4, 5, 9	5, 6

- Across the patterns, the teachers' involvement with the promoted aspects is shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Teachers' involvement with LA-oriented aspects

Aspects of the model	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Self-study	√	√			√		√	√	
Group discussion	√	√	√		√		√	√	√
Presentation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Peer feedback	√	√	√						
Evaluation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Internalisation	√	√			√				
Aspects beyond the promoted model		√							

- In terms of the aspects indicating student control shown in Table 11, Teacher 2 involved the most, while Teachers 4 and 6 the least. It is worth noting only one lesson of Teacher 4 was included in this section (the other one in the next section shows different findings).
- Of the six aspects promoted, presentation and evaluation were most widely employed, peer feedback and internalisation least implemented.
- Evaluation was realised mainly in the form of PFM Points (with an exception of peer-marking in Pattern 2); with teachers mainly the decision makers (with two exceptions by Teachers 1 and 2, who included the students' voices).
- Some features were identified as hindering student control, including: limited space for free thinking and target language use in the activities (such as phrase-searching, sentence drilling and grammar discussion); over-supportive mediating tools (T8); lack of flexibility in adjusting the teacher's plan to address on-site student needs (T3, T8, T9); teacher-student competing for control (T3); lack of genuine collaborative learning opportunities (T4, T6); and uncommitted claim for control release (T6).

The next section will report the third type of practice: Student-led Peer Teaching.

4.2.3 Practice 3: Student-led Peer Teaching

Student-led Peer Teaching was a lesson or part of a lesson in which students stood at the front, performing the role of a teacher. Three lessons were identified into this category (T4.L2; T5.L3; T6.L2). Table 12 provides an overview.

Table 12: Student-led Peer Teaching overview

	T4	T5	T6
Overall task	Revision of 5 learnt units	Language points in a new text	Language points in a new text
Task per group	A unit	A language point	A paragraph
Session lasting for	40 mins	28 mins	41 mins
TTT during the session	< 1 min	~ 6 mins	~ 24 mins
Facilitated by	OHTs; Student-written lesson plan	Chalk & board; Teacher-provided guidelines	Chalk & board
Instruction given by	Student	Teacher	Teacher
Content decided by	Group members	Teacher	Group members
Before teaching	\	Group lesson planning	\
During teaching	A group representative presenting, explaining and asking questions	Team presenting, with one presenting, explaining and asking questions, the other writing notes on board	A group representative presenting, explaining and asking questions
After teaching	Another group representative leading a check-up	Teacher giving feedback / additional comments	Teacher giving feedback / additional comments. Teacher switching back to normal T-led instruction

Teacher 4's lesson reviewed five learnt units, and was led entirely by students. Student control was demonstrated in three ways: group-created lesson plans, group representatives taking turns to deliver the planned lessons, and an alternative representative from each group checking-up the teaching/learning effect. The lesson plans were presented in class through OHTs, which showed such items of the given unit as key sentence patterns, grammar focus, vocabulary and phrases, frequent errors, and writing skills, some of which were also followed with examples and/or exercises (see samples in Appendix 17). When delivering the lesson, a representative played the role of the teacher, going over the items on

the OHTs, explaining their meanings/usage, giving examples, asking the class questions (T4.L2.O, see Observation Extract #12 in Appendix 14 for an example). For the checking-up, a different student from each group asked questions regarding the unit that his/her group had presented. An episode was observed in which the teacher discouraged students from asking questions beyond what had been taught (T4.L2.O, see Observation Extract #13 in Appendix 14).

Teacher 5's lesson dealt with new language points in the text, and was partially student-led. Student control was exhibited in group lesson planning and team teaching, for which the teacher provided a facilitating "teaching outline". For the lesson planning, the teacher required each group to study a language point and stressed the collaborative nature, saying "collaboration must be demonstrated in both preparing and delivering stages; HoGs (head of group) should exercise the leading role to make sure balanced contribution of strong and weak students and no one dominating or neglected" (T5.L3.O). Following that, group members read the teacher's note in turns, negotiated meanings in Chinese or synonyms in English, consulted reference books, or turned to the teacher or even other groups to seek help (T5.L3.O). The team teaching occurred when two students stood at the front, with one speaking (presenting, explaining, and exemplifying) and the other writing key words/points on the board followed by examples; from time to time the former referred to the notes on the board written by the latter. On the completion of students' teaching, the teacher gave her feedback and recapped the point with some different examples (T5.L3.O).

In Teacher 6's case, the lesson was claimed (in Chinese) to be "completely students' performance at the front" (*wan quan rang xue sheng biao xian*) (T6.L1.O), but in reality was more teacher- than student- controlled. Evidence for this can be seen from the time frame of the lesson as follows:

00:00-02:37	Teacher giving instruction
02:37-14:32	Groups 1 and 2 representative teaching
14:32-23:15	Teacher 6 was not satisfied with points that students explained, so took over to make additions and further explanations.
23:15-28:21	Groups 3 and 4 representative teaching
28:21-41:07	Teacher making comments, presenting new points, explaining meaning and demonstrating pronunciation (T6.L2.O)

Peer-teaching of the four groups lasted for approximately 17 minutes in the lesson, during which group representatives stood in the front, presenting and explaining language points as well as asking the class questions and nominating someone to give answers (T6.L2.O). Regarding these presentations, it was noticed that the time allocation among groups was significantly uneven: 12 minutes or so for the first two groups while 5 or so for the other two. Two facts contributed to that: one was that when commenting on the first two groups' work, the teacher expanded considerably the points that the students had presented and illustrated with more examples; the other was that the teacher cut off Group 3's and 4's presentations and shifted to new points that she herself perceived as important (a list of "make" phrases and their usage). Consequently, the teacher talked for more than 21 minutes of the lesson.

Summary of Student-led Peer Teaching

To summarise the three teachers' practice of the Student-led Peer Teaching, student control was demonstrated in the following aspects:

- Student-produced lesson plan drafts (T4)
- Group members co-working on the given texts to prepare for the peer-teaching (T5)
- Students delivering the prepared lessons (T4, T5, T6)
- Peer assessment (T4)
- Team teaching (T5)

In all the three cases, the content of the student-taught lessons was exclusively textbook-based and teacher-assigned. The extent of student control allowed in each lesson varied. Teacher 4 relinquished the control of the lesson completely to students, while Teacher 6 withheld control for over half of the time in spite of her claim of entire control release to students.

So far, I have presented the three types of practices in the 22 observed lessons which demonstrated teachers' attempt to shift control to students. As well, in the summative interview with each teacher, they reported other practices that they developed and took on routinely, in which control was taken by, or shared with, students. The next section presents these reported practices.

4.2.4 Reported practices

The previous section has presented in detail what the teachers actually did about the promotion of LA, but there were further practices referred to by the teachers, which I did not observe but appeared to be LA-facilitating, hence worth noting. Five kinds of practices were reported in the interviews: peer progress checking; intragroup exercise-explaining; HoGs acting as teacher assistants; choosing the best self-study learner; and choosing the most collaborative group. Table 13 provides the actual operation in detail, followed by analytical commentaries on features demonstrating control shift from teachers to students.

Table 13: Reported LA-oriented practices

Reported practices	Examples	Teachers
Peer progress checking (*zhi shi guo guan*)	*I asked students to pair up with a stable partner, and do pair-dictation with vocabulary and check each other text-reciting. Once an item was passed, they checked a box on the Progress Checking Worksheet (zhi shi guo guan biao) on the wall, and accordingly they earn PFM Points for their groups. (T4.I)*	T1, T4
Intragroup exercise-explaining (*jiang xi ti*)	*When dealing with exercises (xi ti), I asked students first to compare answers with each other in groups and then have a discussion against the answer keys, focus on the wrong ones and try to figure out the problems as many as they can. Then I asked each group to report to me the unsorted items, and I only explained those commonly challenging ones. (T1.I)*	T1, T3, T4, T5, T7, T9
HoGs acting as teacher assistants	*For many times, I didn't give students homework, but left it to the HoGs. The next day they gave me a homework list showing who was assigned to do what, and how well that was completed. They also provided such caring feedback as "XXX has got such and such done, this undone yet, but he is working on it". (T2.I)* *The HoGs assisted with some work which I used to do by myself, for example, marking dictation (T7.I), taking turns to lead the morning reading-aloud sessions (T8.I), and checking text-reciting (T9.I).*	T2, T7, T8, T9
Choosing the best self-study learner	*From time to time, I set up a session for self-study, say 20 minutes. I divided it into two parts; first group members studying a given (part of) text individually, and then sharing the self-study learning outcomes within groups. They then chose one which demonstrated best self-study learning outcomes or skills, who would represent the group to present the learning outcomes again to the class. (T2.I)*	T2
Choosing the most collaborative group	*I used this with unit tests. I asked each group to create a test collectively before class, and then in class each group drew a peer-group-created test by lots. They then worked on it together as a group test, but I asked them to go individually, moving from the least to the most able student, each using a pen in a colour unique to him/her. (T2.I)*	T2

The table has displayed a number of features reporting that students took over control from teachers. To name a few, they monitored one another's progress through peer dictation and text-reciting; solved problems through collaborative inquiry; and shared teachers' responsibility for giving assignments and feedback, marking and leading a session. The last two practices of Teacher 2 aimed explicitly at developing students' skills of self-study and collaborative learning.

Although these practices were not actually observed due to the limited number of lessons observed of each teacher, the specific manner in which they were described tends to communicate the message that they were actual classroom occurrences. Moreover, different from those observed practices which could be episodic performances, these practices were reported to be routine.

4.2.5 Summary of teachers' practices

Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.4 have reported teachers' observed and reported practices in relation to the development of LA. Three types of practices were identified from the lessons observed, in each of which student-involved aspects were identified and discussed. Table 14 provides a summary of these practices and shows which teachers adopted what practices, and in what ways student control was involved in each practice.

Table 14: Summary of teachers' LA practices

	Students' involvement	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6		T8	T9
Pre-lesson Presentation	Individual presenting	√	√	√	√		√			
	Team presenting					√			√	√
	Deciding on presenters		√		√					
	Deciding on materials	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
	Peer teaching vocabulary	√		√					√	
	Ask & answer about the presentation	√		√		√			√	
	Peer error correction / critical comments	√	√	√	√					
	Evaluating presentation in PFM Points	√								√

	Students' involvement	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Collaborative Group Learning	Self-study	√	√			√		√	√	
	Group discussion	√	√	√		√		√	√	√
	Presentation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Peer feedback	√	√	√						
	Evaluation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Internalisation	√	√			√				
	Aspects beyond the promoted model		√							

	Students' involvement	T4	T5	T6
Student-led Peer Teaching	Group-written lesson plans	√		
	Group lesson planning		√	
	Delivering the planned lessons	√	√	√
	Team teaching		√	
	Peer assessment	√		

	Students' involvement	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5		T7	T8	T9
Reported practices	Peer progress checking	√			√					
	Intragroup exercise-explaining	√		√	√	√		√		√
	HoGs acting as teacher assistants		√					√	√	√
	Choosing the best self-study learner		√							
	Choosing the most collaborative group		√							

Based on the table, an overall picture of each teacher can be outlined. For example, Teacher 2 employed pre-lesson presentation and collaborative group learning. The former involved students in the selection of presenters and texts and encouraged transformation to the text. With the latter, she involved all the aspects promoted by the ED but demonstrated her unique way of operation, and she embraced other factors such as a routine informal authentic chat with students. She also reported three other regular practices of her own, encouraging autonomy and collaboration, and shifting responsibility to HoGs. Through these practices, she demonstrated herself as an autonomous practitioner of LA development. On the contrary, Teacher 6's case showed that her practices did not orient much towards genuine LA development: although she espoused all three types of LA practices, student involvement in each did not show as much as in the practices of other teachers.

It may be possible to place the teachers on a continuum according to the extent of control allowed for students; Teachers 2 and 6 set the two extreme points, and others were spread somewhere in between.

T2	T1	T5	T4	T8	T3	T9	T7	T6
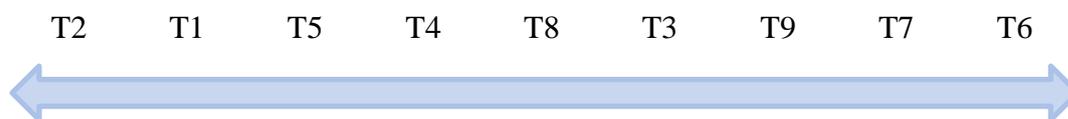
By looking across these practices, I found the following eight aspects commonly involved: self-study, group work, presentation, feedback, evaluation, internalisation, peer teaching, and making choices.

Self-study was termed by different teachers as *self-study* (T1), *autonomous (zi zhu) learning* (T2), and *self-directed learning* (T4), reflected in separate sessions for individual work in class, preparation for individual presenting before class, and choosing the best autonomous learner (T2, reported). Group work was manifested in discussion sessions in class, group lesson planning in preparation for peer teaching, peer exercise-explaining, and choosing the most autonomous learner and collaborative group. Presentation took place both before and during the main lesson, shown in oral and written forms and conducted by individuals or teams. Peer feedback appeared in identifying and correcting presenters' mistakes, asking and answering questions, and making additional and critical comments.

Peer evaluation was observed in the use of PFM Points to award presented work in class, peer-marking, and progress checking, executed solely by teachers, students, or a combination of both. Internalisation was adopted by three teachers, shown in revising and redrafting writing, further practice of new input, and reconstructing the input in an alternative form. Peer teaching was evident in the vocabulary teaching as part of the pre-lesson presentation and the separate peer-teaching lessons. Making choices was reflected in the pre-lesson presentation, in relation to material selection and choosing presenters and texts.

Next, I will move on to report the teachers' underlying thinking about these practices (i.e., the rationales), following the aspects identified above.

4.3 Teachers' cognition regarding learner autonomy

Section 4.2 has reported and commented on the LA-oriented practices that were observed in the 22 lessons and reported by teachers in other lessons. This section presents teachers' beliefs about LA, including their understanding of the concept, its value, and rationales for their specific practices (observed and reported). Critical commentaries are made briefly regarding the LA-facilitating or hindering nature of the rationales, which will be further discussed in Chapter Five. Data drawn on for this section derived from sixteen post-lesson discussions (PLD), nine interviews (IV) and nine departmental open discussions (OD).

4.3.1 Definitions of learner autonomy

Table 15 presents a summary of the definitions that the teachers gave about LA.

Table 15: Understanding the concept of LA

T1	Student-based/focused education (*sheng ben jiao yu*) (T1.I)
T2	Inner strength that keeps people calm and confident in all situations; Capacity to act independently (*du li*), analyse and solve problems by oneself (*zi ji*), with or without external help available (T2.I)
T3	To change students from being passive to being active (*zhu dong*); Students as the agents (*zhu ti*) in class, rather than just listening to teachers; Inner drive (*dong li*) to act on one's own (*zi ji*); Engagement and active (*zhu dong*) participation in class (T3.I)
T4	Having the motivation (*dong li*) to learn, no need to be pushed (T4.I)
T5	To change students from "[others] want me to learn" *(yào wǒ xué)* to "I want to learn" *(wǒ yào xué)*; Learning more actively *(zhu dong)*; Learning how to learn and seeking consultation from such resources as references books or discussion with others (T5.I)
T6	Learning is students' kingdom so they should be the decision-maker; Ability to think independently (*du li*), analyse and solve problems by oneself (*zi ji*) (T6.I)
T7	Students' agency (*zhu ti*); Less TTT and more STT (T7.I)
T8	From teacher-centred to student-centred learning; Having the motivation (*dong li*) to learn; Knowing the value of learning and learning is for oneself (*zi ji*) (T8.I)
T9	Students with strong autonomy *(zi zhu xing)* take more initiative *(zhu dong xing)*; Active *(zhu dong)* learners gradually don't need to be taught – they know how; Learning by oneself (*zi ji*) with guide from teacher, no need to be forced (T9.I)

Five Chinese words emerged from teachers' definitions of LA as presented in the Table 15, listed below with their English equivalents with variables for different parts of speech:

zhu ti	agent / agency
zhu dong	active(ly); taking initiative
dong li	motivation; drive
du li	independent(ly)
zi ji	by oneself; on one's own

These expressions generally reflected teachers' understanding of the notion of LA, classified into three categories: learners' status and role, their psychological attitudes, and physical behaviours. In terms of learners' status and role, students rather than teachers are expected to take the central position in learning. This was seen from such expressions as student-centred/based learning, students' agency or being the agents (*zhu ti*), and students being decision-makers. Psychologically, they have the motivation (*dong li*) to learn, have an active (*zhu dong*) attitude or want to learn, have confidence, and know the personal relevance of their learning. Behaviourally, they act independently (*du li*), know learning methods, and analyse and solve problems by themselves (*zi ji*). Furthermore, some teachers indicated requirements for teachers in developing LA: teachers should talk less and get students to participate as much as possible.

A close examination of the above aspects of the teachers' interpretations of LA suggests clearly a shift of control from teachers to students and emphasis on the psychological attribute of autonomous learners being motivated and active. However, it seems that there lacked a systematic description or illustration in relation to learners' specific responsibilities in the learning process. Also, while both individual and collaborative dimensions of LA have been mentioned, the former was much more in evidence than the latter. Furthermore, although one teacher used the metaphor of students' kingdom of their learning, no one specified student autonomy as a right.

4.3.2 Benefits of learner autonomy

Interview data showed that all the nine teachers recognised highly the value of LA as a crucial ability for students' learning and future development. Three aspects of its benefits were specifically identified: learning, holistic ability, and personal development.

On learning, the effect of autonomy was reported to be certainly positive – either learning in general or learning a specific subject, either at school or in real life. For example, Teacher 9 mentioned that "if students have mastered the method of learning English vocabulary, they can go faster at their own pace without needing to wait to move on until the teacher tells them the meaning or pronunciation"

(T9.I). Teacher 7 maintained that those who have developed good autonomous learning habits "handle better when moving up to high school with more workloads" and that the habit of self-study and ability for independent thinking were indispensable for dealing with exams (T7.I).

On holistic ability, most teachers considered students' future competitiveness, particularly in their job-seeking or professional development. For example, Teacher 8 believed autonomous students "collaborate and work well with others" (T8.I); Teacher 7 held that they are "more adaptable to the changing society" (T7.I); others thought they have "potential organising ability and leadership" (T1.I) and "relatively strong capability for problem solving" (T2.I; T6.I).

Two teachers (T2, T3) talked of the impact of LA on one's personal development. To illustrate, Teacher 2 stressed that "autonomy influences one's way of saying, doing, and thinking, that is, character forming" and that "it is something hard to describe, but comprehensively good for one's wellbeing" (T2.I).

In short, the above comments by the teachers demonstrated a shared belief in the value of LA. The major benefits, of which the teachers showed awareness, generally concurred with the principal's beliefs in this regard. It was also sensed that some teachers (e.g., T1, T8) associated the notion of autonomy to some of students' performances in the group work.

Next, I will present teachers' rationales on their specific practices that were observed and reported.

4.3.3 Rationales for observed and reported practices

Teachers' rationales are presented in terms of eight aspects that were identified as included, more or less, in all teachers' practices across the different types (summarised in Section 4.2.5). They are: self-study, group work, presentation, feedback, evaluation, internalisation, peer teaching, and choice making.

Self-study

To recap, self-study was the first step in the ED's model and considered the premise for any kind of learning from or with others. Yet throughout Section

4.1.2, the ED used interchangeably the two terms "autonomous learning (*zi zhu xue xi*)" and "self-study (*zi xue*)". In addition, "self-directed learning" (originally in English) was used in one teacher's practices (T4.L1.LG). Hence, this section embraces teachers' comments on all these terms. Differentiation with Chinese pinyin is made when necessary.

Teachers' practices with self-study were observed as separate sessions in class, in preparation for presentations before class, and reported practices (see Table 14 in Section 4.2.5). Their rationales concerned the following aspects: learning process and outcomes, conditions and efficiency, the relationship between self-study and group work, students' self-study ability, terminology relating to self-study, and teacher intervention during self-study.

It was generally expressed that the learning process of self-study is one of students exercising their agency and active inquiry; and two teachers (T1, T7) added that understanding generated from self-study was genuine and profound. For example, Teacher 1 interpreted this in a classic Chinese proverb: "Know what, and know why" *(zhi qi ran, zhi qi suo yi ran)*[2], saying that by figuring out the answers through one's own independent thinking, the student knows what the answers are, and how they come into being or why they are like that (T1.L1.PLD).

Teacher 2 viewed self-study as "unconditional" and "most efficient" learning. By "unconditional", she meant that independent learning is "self-reliant", which "can be conducted anywhere anytime, not necessarily requiring anyone else physically present". She exemplified this with her own school experience of learning English: when no study partner had been available, she talked to herself on the bus or to an object like a tree or a wall (T2.L1.PLD). She also shared the principal's viewpoint that "talking-to-oneself is the most efficient oral practice" because "in terms of the practising chance within per unit of time, certainly the value of sharing with no one is the largest" (T2.L1.PLD).

Teacher 7 emphasised that self-study should be the foundation for group work. He

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[2] See 《朱子语类》卷九，《论知行》篇 (*On knowledge and action*，in *Zhu Xi's Reading of the Analects)*, Volume 9. See more about Zhu Xi at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu_Xi#Knowledge_and_action

insisted that students study sufficiently before turning to anyone for help. He said in the interview that he told students,

> **Don't** look at books, **don't** discuss, do **your own** work, use your brain, think **hard** by yourself, […] if you can't figure out, then try to consult your notes, dictionary or reference books, […] still can't, now you can discuss. (T7.L2.PLD)

While the value of self-study was generally recognised, concerned voices were also much heard about students' ability to self-study. For example, Teacher 5 said that she was "not convinced anyhow of the effect of students' self-inquiry", and that she "couldn't help explaining to them once again to double check" (T5.L1.PLD); Teacher 7 commented that "the self-study ability of this school was overall not satisfactory" (T7.L2.PLD); Teacher 9 revealed that, when asking students to study by themselves, they did not know much else to do except memorise vocabulary (T9.L2.PLD).

On another note, conceptual ambiguity was detected regarding the terms that were interchangeably used by the ED and many teachers. Teacher 1 expressed her confusion with autonomous (*zi zhu*) learning and studying on one's own (*zi ji*) in silence. She said,

> But what **on earth** is autonomous learning? Having observed these many lessons, it seemed that the so-called autonomous learning was just students studying in silence. See, once teachers gave the instruction "now, let's start autonomous learning", then **silence,** for 3 to 5 minutes, students worked individually, doing exercises or […]. (T1.I)

A different example showed one teacher's lack of awareness of her intervention during students' independent work session. Regarding her running-on instructions (see Pattern 2 of Collaborative Group Learning in Section 4.2.2), Teacher 2 admitted that she did not realise that she had interrupted the students.

> I: I noticed that after you asked students to start to write, you added more instructions like "don't haste to write", "reorganise your thinking", and so on. Why that? Was there any particular consideration?
>
> T2: Did I? Normally I tried to give instructions as clear as possible,

then I stop talking and let students do their work. I didn't realise that. Perhaps that's the so-called "teachers occupational habit/disease" (jiao shi zhi ye bing) that we're always so concerned that students can't do things properly, so can't stop **instructing** them. That's funny, and stubborn, isn't it? {laugh}

To summarise, teachers' beliefs about self-study revealed that 1) self-study is an active student-inquiring process, which generates thorough understanding; 2) it is unconditional and efficient learning; 3) it should be the foundation for group work; 4) students' ability for self-study was unsatisfactory and concerning; 5) some interchangeably-used terms around self-study were ambiguous; and 6) a teacher was unaware of her intervening action. These points imply that although self-study is perceived a key element of LA significant for learning in many ways, dissonances were heard in such areas as teachers' distrust in learners' capacity for such study, conceptual confusion in relation to self-study and autonomous learning, and unconsciousness of the LA-hindering nature of their actions.

Group work

In a broad sense, 'group' was a core concept of the school LA project, while in a narrow sense in the ED's model, group discussion was the step between self-study and group presentation. A key idea was group work serving as a means of collaboration, by which students could share control and co-construct knowledge before being taught by teachers (see Sections 4.1.2.2 and 4.1.2.3). Teachers' practices with group work were manifested in discussion sessions in class, group lesson planning in preparation for peer teaching, and some of the reported practices (see Table 14 in Section 4.2.5).

Teachers' thinking about group work involved the following aspects: benefits to learning effect, control and power shift, difficulties and challenges, manner of discussion, facilitating tools used, and reflections on some not-well-conducted discussion sessions.

It was generally commented that group work is beneficial for students to learn from one another, particularly in that it broadens their thinking and views. For example, Teacher 2 said that discussion "clarifies one's own thinking and stimulates and inspires each other's" (T2.I); Teacher 4 quoted the Chinese proverb

"Three cobblers with their wits combined, equal Zhuge Liang, the master, mind [3] (*san ge chou pi jiang, ding ge zhu ge liang*)" (T4.I). Teacher 3 cited the following saying about idea-exchanging:

> If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange apples,
> then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea
> and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will
> have two ideas.[4] (T3.I)

Five teachers (T1, T2, T5, T6, T8) related group work to control or power shift through students sharing and helping one another. For example, regarding the direct and indirect speech activity (see Pattern 5 of Collaborative Group Learning in Section 4.2.2), Teacher 8 told of his intention,

> I intended to make it an opportunity for peer explaining, either the
> more able ones offering to explain, or the less able initiating to ask. I
> wanted to shift the teaching power to students as much as possible, to
> get them help each other as much as possible. (T8.L1.PLD)

Teacher 1 further pointed out the shared nature of such control shift, and the role of the HoGs. She said,

> In the past, the class was controlled completely by me myself, in
> which students took whatever I gave. Now with groupwork, control is
> partially passed on to the HoGs and some strong students. Some HoGs
> took very good responsibility (T1.I)

All the teachers pointed out the issue of class participation when running group work, but their voices diverged, with two firmly affirmative (T2, T3) while others were more doubtful. Teacher 3 claimed that her students loved group work and participated actively (T3.I); Teacher 2 held that group work increased participation, in that it created different roles in a group, so the less able ones could fit in with something easier while the more able ones could take a leading or

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[3] Zhuge Liang, a famous statesman and strategist, was chief minister of the State of Shu (220 – 280 BC) (Adair, 2011)

[4] Originally, by George Bernard Shaw (https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:George_Bernard_Shaw); Teacher 3 did not mention the source.

organising role (T2.I).

Difficulties and challenges were expressed with various student issues. A major one related to their inactive participation in groupwork, and reasons varied, including weak learning capacity (T5, T6, T8), shy and quiet personality (T4), and lack of interest in group discussion (T1) or certain topics (T9). Another one concerned poor self-control of some students. For those students, as Teacher 7 claimed, groupwork neither guaranteed their learning effect nor enhanced their autonomy; rather, it created the physical condition for them to depend on others more easily while the learning effect remained unknown. His logic behind the claim was as such: working individually, everyone must think hard to get answers by him or herself anyhow; while in groups, they can easily copy answers from others, without even bothering to think whether the answers are correct or not and why or why not (T7.L2.PLD).

Furthermore, several teachers expressed their confusion about, or disapproval of, the manner in which discussion should be conducted. According to the ACE Class Evaluation Standards that the ED provided (see Section 4.1.2.4), a sign for good student participation and engagement is that discussion is 'heated' (*re du*) or demonstrates 'liveliness' (ES). Regarding such a standard, however, voices of scepticism were heard. For example, Teacher 1 asked:

> What is heated discussion? And how heated is heated enough? Should, and could, all students behave in that sort of passionate manner? Learning takes place within students' brain. If someone stares at the book, motionless and emotionless, can you tell if he is learning or not? Maybe he is in deep thinking, or maybe he is distracted by something else. (T1.I)

Meanwhile, Teacher 3's lesson appeared exaggeratedly 'lively' – in that her students made obvious signs for discussion (Pattern 8 in Section 4.2.2) – and she expressed a definitely positive attitude and gave clearly her purpose. She said: "Students of this age are lively by nature and full of energy, so get them moving, and keep them busy; cuddling heads together was like a signal, and put them into immediate action" (T3.L2.PLD).

On a different note, Teacher 4 commented on the applicability of discussion for

language lessons. On the one hand, she felt that "there was not as much suitable for discussion in language lessons as in maths (except for when introducing a new topic)"; on the other, she found "the model working fairly well with peer checking and explaining exercises, an activity similar to maths problem-solving" (see reported practices in Section 4.2.5)" (T4.I).

The next issue related to tool-using in group discussions. Mediating instruments of various types were adopted in most discussions, but the teachers revealed different awareness of the facilitating or hindering nature of the instruments employed. For example, Teacher 5 demonstrated a clear understanding of the "what, why, and how" about the worksheet she used in the "relay writing" activity (see Pattern 3 in Section 4.2.2). The following excerpt is illustrative,

> […] there was a space for everyone, so no one could escape; like a relay, one finished and another one took over, so they pushed each other […] without that, some would have stood by, seeming none of their business. […]   it's important that the task was relevant, and responsibility clear for each individual […] I knew that because I'm the not-very-active type. When the ED trained us, Ying was very active in our group, so she became our spokesman, and I was content to stay quiet and relaxed. (T5.L2.PLD)

The quotation disclosed her thinking in relation to the design of the worksheet and the source of her thinking: she provided a space for each student to contribute an idea, indicating clear individual responsibility, the awareness of which was obtained from the ED's training session. She adopted a similarly facilitating tool for the group lesson planning (see Section 4.2.2), yet her subsequent statement exposed her lack of trust in students' ability of "getting the right point". She said: "I worried that they didn't know where to start, and which points were important, so I made a list of questions for each group" (T5.L3.PLD).

In Teacher 8's case of the story-making activity (see Pattern 6 in Section 4.2.2), he displayed his original consideration for free mind expression, but changed his thinking to accommodate for students' examination needs:

> I did not provide the clues at the beginning, thinking it would give them an opportunity to imagine and express freely. But it occurred to me that this type of writing is common in exams, so I decided to make

it a practice for that as well, then I added the clues like the writing outline. (T8.L1.PLD)

A different example was found with Teacher 9, who revealed limited thinking in relation to the necessity of tools or alternative options. The following excerpt illustrates this:

> R: You provided each group a table, why was that?
> T: Nothing too special, just what I normally do.
> R: Do you think it would make any difference to or not to use the table? Or one for each student instead of for each group?
> T: Shouldn't be much difference. Without the one I gave, they could draw one quickly by themselves. er… one for each, could be an idea. I don't think that would matter much. (T9.L2.PLD)

In two cases, group discussion was terminated by the teachers in order to give way to presentation (Pattern 6 in Section 4.2.2). The two teachers' responses exposed their lack of awareness of making flexible changes to accommodate on-site students' needs as well as their reluctance to do so. Specifically, Teacher 8 said that he did realise the time allowed for the discussion was inadequate, but "subconsciously" he tried to finish every step that he had planned (T8.L1.PLD). Similarly, Teacher 9 expressed that she wanted to "keep the class in control", that is, "to let them discuss, present, or listen to the teacher, depending on the situation". In addition, when asked further if she would give more chance or time to students when they requested so, she said "not really" (T9.L2.PLD).

Notably, there was an extreme example with Teacher 6's lesson in which no student action followed the teacher's instruction for discussion (Pattern 11 in Section 4.2.2). The teacher's reflection on the episode disclosed her deviation from the lesson plan and her lack of understanding of the actual classroom occurrence. Specifically, she "designed the session originally as an individual work", but then "asked students to discuss in groups" because she found "some slow students could not find the answers". When in reality no actual discussion took place (little time was allowed for students to do so according to the observation), she attributed that largely to students' inactiveness and lack of teacher "push".

> Actually the discussion didn't happen. It's my fault. A pushing force missed there. I think I should have given them a push, say, if I had

said "come on, **discuss**"; and then another push: "why **still no** discussion?" and then another: "**discuss**, otherwise deduct your PFM Points." These students are a bit slack / lazy. No push, no work. (T6.L1.PLD2)

To conclude this section, key points of teachers' thinking about group discussion are summarised as follows:

- Teachers generally believed group work broadened students' views;
- Five teachers held group work enhanced control and power shift from teachers to students;
- Two teachers viewed group work as conducive to student participation, while others expressed challenges with students' uneven participation in group work;
- One teacher showed enthusiasm for "heated" discussion, while others questioned its necessity and feasibility and further about a prescribed manner for discussion;
- One teacher was not assured of the applicability of group work for language lessons in comparison with that for maths;
- Teachers demonstrated different awareness of the facilitating tools used in discussion: having clear rationales, with little consciousness, and dynamic thinking during the lesson;
- Two teachers showed a subconscious tendency to keep strictly to their lesson plans;
- One teacher revealed her lack of understanding of unrealised teacher instruction.

These points imply a double-sided nature of teachers' beliefs about group work: on the one side, it was perceived as beneficial in broadening students' views and facilitating the shift of control from teachers to students; on the other, contextual factors of various types were considered constraining for its smooth implementation in reality. In addition, the rationales that the teachers provided indicated some teachers' incomplete understanding or insufficient awareness of some key issues in using group work to enhance students' autonomy, for example, appropriate use of mediating instruments.

Presentation

In the ED's model, presentation was a platform for students to share group learning outcomes, so as to upgrade collaboration from intra- to inter-group level (Section 4.1.2.3). In teachers' practices, presentation took place both before and

during the main lesson, shown in oral and written forms, and conducted by individuals or team. The rationales behind the practices concerned such aspects as language learning, language use, self-expression and show, individual needs and control shift.

Overall, the pre-lesson presentations were regarded primarily as a beneficial activity for improving language skills rather than for the development of LA. With all skills involved, the foci differed from one another, including speaking (T1, T2, T8), listening and vocabulary (T3), reading and writing (T5), pronunciation and intonation (T6), grammar and structure (T9), and the "sense of language" (*yu gan*) (T4). For example, Teacher 3 said: "they picked up new vocabulary; and while the presenter was talking, it's a listening practice for others" (T3.L1.PLD). Teacher 5 added: "the presentation brought in new ideas, so students had more to say when writing a topic once presented and discussed; and the questions raised in the presentation helped with reading comprehension questions" (T5.L2.PLD). And Teacher 4 stressed: "a text is an all-in-one thing, so it helped develop the overall sense of language (T4.L1.PLD).

Two teachers (T2, T8) considered the communicative nature of language and language as the tool for expressing what is in the mind. Teacher 2 said: "I want my students to be able to present themselves appropriately in public, and express their mind freely" (T2.L1.PLD). In the case of Teacher 8, he wanted to change "a seemingly common misbelief or misconception about language learning that written exams outweighed everything else", so he "placed the highlight on the application aspect" (T8.L1.PLD). Such a connection between presenting and language using indicated a recognition of these two teachers of the free 'mind expression' as an important feature of language learner autonomy.

Another two teachers (T1, T5) believed that presenting encourages and enhances self-study due to students', especially teenagers', desire "to show themselves". Teacher 1 elaborated the mechanism as such: "Everyone wanted to show a good image, for which he must really put efforts into preparation, including figuring out the meaning and clearing pronunciation problems, so as to deliver the speech smoothly" (T1.L1.PLD). Teacher 5 added that "the preparing process made them take more initiative" (T5.L2.PLD). These impacts of presenting on individual

study and on enhancing students' responsibility seemed to be a positive washback for LA.

Teachers 5 and 8 related their promotion of team presenting to cater for individual needs and gradually shifting more control to students. In Teacher 5's case, a more able student (the chairperson) led and asked questions, so "the good could be better"; while the relatively weak one just did the minimum (giving the speech); and the other one wrote the questions on the board, so that "those who couldn't understand by listening could read the questions" (T5.L2.PLD). As to the assignment of roles, the teacher started to do this, but "after a while when students are familiar with the process", she would "let students do – each of them to assign a next person to pass the role on" (T5.L2.PLD). These statements demonstrated the two teachers' clear awareness of the purposes of using team (instead of individual) presenting and their knowledge of using peer-scaffolding to accommodate individuality.

Teacher 1 explained her use of a combination of written and spoken presentations, which revealed her concern about mistakes and consideration of scaffolding. On the one hand, written work exposed problems hardly noticeable in speaking, which students needed to be aware of for exam needs; on the other hand, by writing key information down before talking, the former served as a supporting tool on which the latter could be based (T1.L4.PLD).

Further regarding presentation, Teacher 1 expressed a big concern of hers regarding unpredictable matters in actual classroom operations against pressure from limited class time. She said,

> You expected a smooth going, but are always stumbled by this or that.
> If students presented wrong stuff, shall I then correct them or not? It's
> not right not to do so, as the purpose of the presentation is to help
> them master the knowledge, so mistakes should be corrected in time;
> but to do so, time was short, then you can't finish your teaching plan.
> (T1.L3.PLD)

Teacher 1's comment might be a sign of lack of understanding of, or skill in, anticipating students' difficulties. Also she showed an inclination for exhaustive error correction during the presentation, the purpose somewhat different from the

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ED's intention of intergroup sharing of learning outcomes (see Section 4.1.2.3). A last point concerned the issue of classroom agenda: what agenda should be followed, students' learning pace, or teachers' teaching plan?

In a different episode, a "tug-of-war" was observed between the teacher and a student in relation to manner of presenting: the teacher insisted on her way, while the student insisted on his (T3.L1.O, Pattern 8 in Section 4.2.2). The post-lesson discussion about this episode revealed some LA-inhibiting nature in the teacher's thinking. Specifically, in the middle of the presentations, the teacher altered her instruction (not allowing any longer the presenter to read notes from the blackboard), and "deliberately" made the task more demanding, "for the purpose of taking the opportunity to develop students' attentive listening". Then, however, the presenter was actually a student "relatively slow and weak", as the teacher commented, and "it was an open lesson with many observers, so he (the student) might be quite nervous" (T1.L1.PLD). Under such circumstances, the teacher did not provide extra support for the student, but insisted that the student should act as instructed (T1.L1.O). Moreover, while commenting on the student as "very peculiar and different from others", the teacher did not show consideration of respecting or addressing his peculiarity. On the contrary, she said: "I just wanted to straighten him out". She then admitted that she herself "might be a very dominant character and want to take control" and that her way of managing students might be a reflection of her "inner-heart thinking". Feeling a 'headache' because of the particular student, the teacher expressed her continuous thinking as to "how to change him" (T1.L1.PLD). The teacher's reflection on (and in) this episode exposed the following elements in her LA-related beliefs: a hidden desire (a quite strong one) to control the class and students, lack of awareness of catering for students' individuality, and insufficient genuine understanding of the nature of LA.

To conclude this section regarding presentation, main points are summarised as follows:

- All teachers took the pre-lesson presentations as an extra opportunity for language skill improvement;
- Two teachers considered the communicative function of language and free expression to be important;

- Two teachers believed that presenting boosted self-study and initiative taking and enhanced control shift to students;
- Two teachers related the presentations to students' individual needs, while others did not;
- Consideration for scaffolding was evident;
- Concern was expressed about error correction for language accuracy and unanticipated classroom incidents;
- One example revealed the teacher' sub-consciousness of strong control of the class and students, lack of awareness of addressing students' individuality and special classroom incidents, and lack of genuine understanding of the nature of LA.

An overview of these points provides a similar implication to that from the previous two aspects (i.e., self-study and group work): the benefits of presentation for LA development was widely recognised by the teachers from various ways, and some teachers demonstrated clear purpose of using this activity (e.g., to enhance free mind expression) and good knowledge of relevant practical techniques (e.g., scaffolding); meanwhile some teachers revealed reluctance to give genuine control in their practice and lack of consciousness of such LA-inhibiting element in their actions (e.g., lack of consideration and accommodation for individual differences).

Peer feedback

In the ED's model, peer feedback was a follow-up to the presentation for the audience to ask questions about, and make additional or critical comments on, the presentation. In the teachers' practices, peer feedback took the forms of ask-and-answer, error correction, and additional or critical comments. Teachers' thinking about this session concerned such aspects as learning from mistakes, class participation and engagement, peer and self-checking, and critical thinking.

It was generally held that peer feedback provided an opportunity for students to learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses, in which learning from mistakes was highlighted. For example, Teacher 3 said: "I welcome students' mistakes. The more exposed, the better. If they could spot and correct the mistakes in everyday study, they won't get it wrong again in exams" (T3.L1.PLD). Teacher 1's perspective was slightly different, saying that "often people are not aware of their own mistakes, but can spot others' more easily; so

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peer error correction is like a mirror, through which they point out others' weaknesses and remind themselves" (T1.L1.PLD).

On the same action (of peer error correction), Teacher 2 emphasised her focus more on self- and peer-checking than on the errors themselves. About the session in her text-reciting activity (Section 4.2.2), she stressed that, during the recitation, no one was allowed to look at the textbook, because she "did not want to direct students' attention to fault-finding, but primarily to an opportunity to check their own learning" (T2.L1.PLD).

In addition, the feedback session enhanced students' participation and engagement. Some teachers (T1, T3, T8) admitted that the feedback session was an action that they "added" to the presentation in order to hold students' attention. Teacher 8 said: "There was no question session followed at the beginning, then I found, during the presentation, some students didn't listen; so I added this part, so as to give them some pressure to listen carefully" (T8.L1.PLD). Teacher 2 also took it as an opportunity to develop students' study skills: "learn to be a good listener", which meant "to show respect to the speaker first of all, and to keep one's thinking actively involved" (T2.L1.PLD).

Teacher 6 related this session to the idea of critical thinking, yet her comments were self-contradictory. On the one hand, she claimed that she "surely gave students the opportunity to have a go, to make an analysis, and to express their opinions about their classmates' performance"; on the other hand she herself withheld firm control and power to judge the validity of the comments: she would award them with PFM Points only when the comments made sense and "complied with" hers. However, according to her judgement, students "could not say much valuable stuff, or get the point at all" (T6.L1.PLD). These comments showed a strong negative attitude that Teacher 6 held towards students' ability to provide peer feedback, and a lack of awareness that she actually released little genuine control to students.

In summary, the teachers' rationales reported in this section displayed their beliefs in positive effects of learning from peer feedback, attention to enhancing student participation and engagement, and awareness and knowledge of developing

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students' study skills and critical thinking. On the other hand, divergences were disclosed between a teacher's claim to provide opportunities for peer feedback and her distrust in students' capacity to use these.

Evaluation

Evaluation was considered to be as one of the six principles in the school LA project, (4.1.2.2) and an aspect following up presentation in the ED's model (Section 04.1.2.3), taking PFM Points as its operational form (Section 4.1.2.4). The emphasis was on such orientation as to its formative assessing or evaluative nature, shared control, and progress indicator for both groups and individuals, in relation to academic learning and school behaviours.

In teachers' practices, evaluation appeared mostly in the form of PFM points awarded to groups for presented work by teachers, peer-marking in one lesson (T2.L2), and peer progress checking in the reported practices (Section 4.2.4).

Teachers' rationales for using the PFM Points involved such aspects as motivating or disciplining students, self- or peer-evaluation and reflection, and control and power shift from teachers to students.

All the teachers believed that the PFM Points, in one way or another, motivated students. Teacher 4 explained the mechanism in a well-known Chinese proverb: "All students want, was nothing but marks, marks, and marks" (*fen fen fen –xue sheng de ming gen er*). Therefore, "earning points aroused their interest and stimulated motivation" (T4.I). Teacher 9 added: "Hearing PFM Points, students act immediately" (T9.I). Teachers 1, 2 and 5 brought in another Chinese concept called "team collective glory" (*ji ti rong yu gan*), and related that to self-recognition. As Teacher 5 said,

> Everyone tried their best to earn points for their group. For the weak ones, being able to make some contribution to the group glory was a way of self-recognition, which made them feel good and proud of themselves, and motivated them to work even harder. (T5.I)

Teachers 6 and 9 took the PFM Points as a powerful tool to discipline students and explained the reason in terms of "peer pressure". Teacher 9 said: "If some

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students made their group lose points, they would be under pressure from their group members, who would 'nudge and urge' (*du cu*) them to get things right" (T9.I).

It is worth noting that while using PFM Points as a motivating tool was a positive reinforcement for students, the practical use of the Points as a powerful tool to force students contained an element of punishment, and a punishing nature seemed to be against that of autonomy.

Teachers 1 and 3 revealed their intention to use the PFM Points as a means of evaluation. Differently, Teachers 3's purpose was for herself "to see how well students had mastered the learnt knowledge" (T3.I), while Teacher 1 wished to utilise the Points for peer-evaluation and further for self-reflection. She said,

> Rather than me giving however many points to whomever as I think, I want students to evaluate each other by the PFM Points, through which they can then see their own strengths and weaknesses, as a good tool to learn from others. Yet this goal is not achieved. (T1.I)

The quotation brought in the point self-reflection, that is, through the peer-evaluation results, students could have a further think about themselves and learn from each other. It also expressed Teacher 1's intention to transfer some of her decision-making power to students: a control shift in relation to making judgement and evaluation. Such thinking of control shift was shared by Teacher 4, but in a different way. In her case, the HoGs' taking over the responsibility of recording the PFM Points "reduced her own workload", and the students were "happy and willing to act somewhat like the teacher" (T4.L2.PLD).

Teachers 1, 2 and 9 involved students in suggesting PFM Points, on which their thinking varied. Teacher 1 expressed the gap between intention and reality, saying "it was necessary and important to listen to students' voice, but hard to operate in reality due to no standard as to how many points for what kind of performance" (T1.L4.PLD). Teacher 2 demonstrated her belief in genuine control transfer, saying that "as long as she **seriously gave,** her students **seriously took** the power to judge" (T2.L2.PLD). Teacher 9, however, showed her lack of purposeful thinking and casual usage of the Points, as in the following quotation.

I didn't think much. Just sometimes students say this or that is unfair, so occasionally I have an interaction with them; also it was an open lesson, just to boost the class dynamics a bit. But sometimes I just give a mark directly. It's hard to get them all to agree. (T9.L2.PLD)

Apart from PFM Points, Teacher 2 was observed to have used peer-marking of student writing, which she thought of as critical thinking. She said: "it did not matter much what a mark they gave to each other; but to make a judgement, they needed to think critically" (T2.I.PLD).

In short, PFM points were used for such means: motivating or disciplining students, teacher evaluation of student performance, student peer-evaluation and self-reflection, and sharing responsibility. While most of these were LA-encouraging, the adoption as disciplining students and teacher evaluation tools was, by nature, teacher-served. Also noticeably, while most of the use was realised, some remained as an intention.

Internalisation

Internalisation was the last step in the ED's model, which was intended for students to reflect on and assimilate the knowledge constructed previously through individual self-study and collaborative group work. In teachers' practices, this was not observed much as an explicit session but somewhat seen or indicated in three examples (T1, T2, T5), in the form that individual students further processed the work which was previously done in some sense collaboratively. In the post-lesson discussions and interviews, only two teachers (T1, T2) mentioned this aspect.

Teacher 2 expressed her belief in the value of internalisation as an essential part of learning process. She related this session to her frequent use of such activities as "talk to yourself", "check by yourself" or "have a re-thinking on your work", for which she thought as follows:

Whether new knowledge is constructed autonomously (*zi zhu*) or collaboratively in the process, the very last step must be self-internalisation. Only through a self-digestion or reflection, can what you have learned become genuinely your own, and can you then use it freely. (T2.I)

Quite differently, Teacher 1 pointed out internalisation as an ambiguous concept in the ED's model, and felt it confusing in implementation. Her comments revealed some confusion between internalisation and assessment.

> Expressions like "learning difficulty digestion" (*xue kun xiao hua*) and "learning outcomes assessment" (*fan kui jian ce*) are a bit general. Learning is a gradual and holistic process, the effect of which is hard to be demonstrated through assessment of a certain knowledge point. (T1.L4.PLD)

Overall, compared to other aspects in the ED's model, internalisation was much less reflected in teachers' thinking. While understanding and belief about it was shown, misconception was equally in evidence.

Peer teaching

Peer teaching was not a specified session in the ED's model, but observed in some teachers' lessons as part of the Pre-lesson Presentation (T1, T3, T8), and a separate part of a lesson (T4, T5, T6). Teachers' rationales about peer teaching involved consideration about self and collaborative inquiry or exploration, learning by teaching, active learning, and diversity of classroom instruction.

All the teachers expressed in some way that peer teaching created opportunities for self-inquiry or exploration. If students are to teach others something, they must learn and understand it by themselves. Taking the vocabulary-teaching for example, before teaching a new word or phrase, the presenter must figure out the meaning and pronunciation, for which he or she might use a dictionary or ask the teacher or other classmates for help (T3.L1.PLD).

Two teachers (T1, T8) associated their practices directly to the 'Pyramid of Learning', and shared their belief that learning to teach generates the most comprehensive and profound understanding of what has been learnt. The following excerpt illustrates this:

> I have shared with my students the Learning Pyramid Theory. What remains least in their mind is what they have listened to me talk, which is a sheer putting-in process; […] but what exists in students' mind most is what they can "put out"; sometimes they feel "oh, I see".

It doesn't not mean they have thoroughly understood everything; but if they can "teach out", and explain clearly, then they'll never forget. (T8.L1.PLD)

Teacher 4 committed the whole lesson to students' control, and her thinking about the lesson demonstrated her belief in peer-teaching as an active learning opportunity and her positive attitude towards students' performance in the activity and their potential for gradually being more autonomous. Specifically, there was an array of thoughts behind this activity, including her reflection on her previous way of teaching, the collaborative group learning being promoted, and inspiration from students' questions. Subsequently, students' performance exceeded her expectation, and she believed that they could do more and do better in the future. The following passage tells more:

> I've done almost everything with students, from language points to texts and exercises, but I feel they were still just learning passively. Given the collaborative group learning being promoted at the school, and some students asked some very good questions, […] then I thought maybe I could let students do something to experience the learning process. […] Then the idea occurred to me that each group led a session of reviewing a unit […]. They did quite well, much better than I expected. I should let them do more like this, and I'm sure they'll have more and more autonomy (*zi zhu xing*). (T4.L2.PLD)

Teacher 5's case was an occasional alternative to the normal teacher-led class for the purpose of fun and diversity of classroom instruction. Contradictory thinking was exposed regarding students' taking control and learning effect. With student control, she said she should "let go more control to students in order to get students more independent", but she was not convinced that "students could go without the 'cane' of the teacher". Consequently, she selected a small section of the text for students to teach each other, and provided a detailed "teaching guideline". As to learning effect, while she claimed that "students would be very impressed on what they themselves had taught" and that "those being taught might understand peer teaching better than teacher's teaching", she was much concerned about the small "classroom learning capacity", that is, the amount of knowledge that could be covered within a period of class time (T5.L3.PLD).

Contradictory beliefs were also reflected in Teacher 6's case, between the

teacher's wish to let students taking control and their inability to do so. On the one hand, she thought she "should let students go to have a collaborative exploration and share with each other"; on the other, she found "they couldn't get the key points, or explain the points thoroughly". Consequently, she took back the control and "provided some additional explanation and examples." Furthermore, she believed that her delivery and explanation were "certainly clearer, more to-the-point, and better-supported with examples" than students' (T6.L2.PLD).

To summarise, the three teachers' thinking about the peer teaching reported in this section demonstrated a general recognition of the value of self-inquiry and learning through teaching. However, their beliefs differed considerably from one another's in relation to the initial purposes and attitudes towards students' performances in the peer teaching and potential for more autonomy by doing so.

Choices and decision making

The aspect of choices and decision making was one identified from the Pre-lesson Presentation, in which students were involved to choose materials and presenters. Teachers' thinking about this aspect concerned allowing freedom for students, enhancing initiative, developing critical thinking, and student empowerment.

Three teachers expressed that, by getting students to choose their own material, they intended to give students some freedom. Teachers 1 and 3 revealed that while students had no choice with the textbook, they could choose something they were interested in for such an extra class activity (T1.L1.PLD; T1.L3.PLD). Teacher 8 said that students had different "favourite tastes", and he did not want to "frame them all in one box" (T8.L1.PLD).

Teacher 5 associated students making a choice with the idea of initiative taking, in that "to choose" required first "having choices to choose from", and "students, rather than the teachers, had to act on their own to do the actual searching and selecting" (T5.L2.PLD). Teacher 8 related such selecting further to critical thinking ability, saying that "to make a decision, one has to examine and make comparisons, during which he or she thinks critically" (T8.L1.PLD).

Teacher 2 involved her students in choosing the presenters, and she demonstrated

her firm belief in the value of empowering students and their ability of making good use of the given power. She claimed that by getting students to make some decisions she "transferred part of her teacher authority to students" and that she believed her students would "exercise the given power in a desirably positive way". She said: "I trust them; they are positive and upright; and they choose the most difficult section to challenge their fellow classmates" (T2.L1.PLD).

Overall, the three teachers' beliefs about involving students in choices and decision making demonstrated their recognition of the value of such practices and a LA-supporting nature in their beliefs.

4.3.4 Summary of teachers' cognition

Sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.3 have reported and commented on teachers' beliefs about LA, including their understanding of the notion of LA, the significance of its development, and their thinking about specific classroom actions.

Teachers' understanding of the notion of LA concerned three major categories: learners' status/role, their psychological attitudes, and physical behaviours. In terms of learners' status/role, students rather than teachers take the central position in learning. Psychologically, they have the motivation to learn. Behaviourally, they act independently, and analyse and solve problems by themselves. The teachers demonstrated a shared belief in the value of LA from three dimensions: learning, holistic ability and personal development. These benefits generally concurred with the principal's beliefs in this regard.

Teachers' rationales were presented in terms of eight aspects, summarised in Table 16:

Table 16: Summary of teachers' beliefs

Aspects	Teachers' thinking revealed they …

self-study	**Understood this is for:**
	  ✓ Ss exercising agency and active inquiry
	  ✓ genuine and profound understanding
	  ✓ unconditional and efficient learning
	  ✓ foundation for group work
	Did not fully understand: differences between self-study, autonomous learning, and individually working in silence
	Trusted or not ss' ability for doing so:
	  ✓ able to meet or exceed teachers' expectations
	  - not knowing what to do
	  - concerning learning effect
	  - generally unsatisfactory
	Were (un)aware of:
	  - unaware of intervening action

group work	**Understood this is for:**
	  ✓ broadening views and thinking
	  ✓ control shift to students
	  ✓ enhancing participation
	Did not fully understand:
	  - expected manner of discussion and ss' individuality
	  - nature of LA
	Trusted or not ss' ability for doing so:
	  - various not-so-actively-participating students
	Were (un)aware of:
	  ✓ explicit awareness of the facilitated tool used
	  - little awareness of the facilitated tool used
	  - subconsciousness of keeping teacher-planned agenda
	  - lack of awareness of unrealised teacher instruction

presentation	**Understood this is for:**
	  ✓ language learning and improvement
	  ✓ communicative function of language and free mind expressing
	  ✓ self-study and initiative taking
	  ✓ control shift
	  ✓ individual needs
	Did not fully understand:
	  - nature of LA
	  - anticipating students' difficulties
	Were (un)aware of:
	  ✓ aware of scaffolding
	  - sub-consciousness of strong control of the class and students
	  - lack of awareness of addressing students' individuality and special classroom incidents

feedback	**Understood this is for:**
	  ✓ mutual learning from strengths / weakness
	  ✓ self- / peer checking
	  ✓ better participation and engagement
	  ✓ study skills
	  ✓ critical thinking
	Trusted or not ss' ability for doing so:
	  - paradoxical beliefs

evaluation	**Understood this is for:**
	✓ motivating students
	- disciplining students
	- teachers to evaluate students
	✓ peer-evaluation
	✓ self-reflection
	✓ sharing responsibility
	Did not fully understand:
	- operational techniques
	Were (un)aware of:
	- false control release
internalisa-tion	**Understood this is for:**
	✓ self-digestion or reflection
	Did not fully understand:
	- internalisation and assessment
peer teaching	**Understood this is for:**
	✓ self-inquiry
	✓ Learning by teaching
	✓ active learning
	✓ diversity of classroom instruction
	✓ control release for ss exploration
	Trusted or not ss' ability for doing so:
	- Yes, they did well
	- Concerned
	- No, they can't
	Were (un)aware of:
	- withdrawn control release
choice making	**Understood this is for:**
	✓ freedom
	✓ initiative taking
	✓ critical thinking
	✓ student empowerment

(Notes: "√" indicates LA-facilitating and "–" indicates LA-hindering)

As indicated in the table (**in bold**), the teachers' rationales for their LA-oriented practices can be approximately divided into three categories: their understanding of the purpose in involving learner control in a certain aspect, their trust in learners' capacity for taking control in the aspect, and their awareness or knowledge of their actions or operational techniques regarding the aspect. Each category involved two sides: LA-facilitating (indicated by "√" in the table) and LA-hindering (indicated by "–" in the table).

4.4 Summary of the findings

This chapter has presented the findings to the research questions in relation to beliefs and practices of developing learner autonomy through control shift, relating to both school managers and the English department teachers at Zia. Major points of the findings are summarised as follows.

First, the principal recognised highly the value of LA and made it a key school vision. He interpreted the notion in terms of three changes taking place in the development of LA: from "others want me to learn" to "I want to learn"; from "other-disciplined" to "self-disciplined"; and from "learning to be able" to "being able to learn". He acknowledged the importance of releasing control to students for learner autonomy, teachers' beliefs in LA for their pedagogical practices, and allowing freedom for teachers to teach autonomously in their own way. He was aware of the discordance between a model and the nature of LA, but allowed an innovation model to proceed at the school to 'facilitate' teachers' practices.

Second, the executive director promoted an innovation project at Zia, involving three key concepts: autonomy, collaboration, and efficiency. The general principle of the project was students learn autonomously on their own and collaboratively with peers, aiming for the ultimate goal of learning efficiency. For the implementation of the project, he suggested a four-step class model, comprising self-study, collaborative group work, presentation, and internalisation. To 'facilitate' teachers' operation, concrete measures were taken on a school-wide scale: a group-based classroom management mechanism; team lesson planning; peer observation and evaluation; and collective open discussions and peer feedback giving. Mediating tools were adopted for these measures, consisting of Performance Points, Learning Guide, the four-step ACE Class Model and its Evaluation Standards. These measures and tools exposed a double-edged nature, enhancing or constraining a genuine thorough control release to learners and teachers.

Third, teachers' beliefs about LA showed commonality with the managers', involving learners' central role in learning, their psychological and behavioural control over their learning. A strong self- nature was disclosed in teachers' LA beliefs, and there was lacking a systematic identification of learners' specific

responsibilities in the learning process. The benefits of LA were widely acknowledged among the teachers, concerning school learning, lifelong learning, and personal development. Regarding teachers' LA-oriented practices, three types were observed: Pre-lesson Presentation, Collaborative Group Learning and Student-led Peer Teaching. In addition, some teachers reported other routine activities with strong feature of student control. Teachers' rationales behind their classroom practices demonstrated great diversity, involving three major themes: their purpose of involving learner control, attitudes towards learners' capacity for taking control, and awareness or knowledge of their actions or operational techniques. Each of these themes showed double-sided elements: facilitating or inhibiting genuine control release to learners for their autonomy.

While brief commentaries have been provided along with the findings in this chapter, the next chapter will discuss them further in light of the relevant literature, including the convergences and divergences between the LA beliefs and practices found at Zia and an explanation for the convergences and divergences.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

故圣人云：
我无为而民自化, 我好静而民自正;
我无事而民自富, 我无欲而民自朴。
——老子（公元前六世纪）

Therefore the sage says：
I do nothing, and the people, by themselves, evolve;
I say nothing, and the people, by themselves, go right;
I let go control, and the people, by themselves, prosper;
I let go desire, and the people, by themselves, remain simple and pure.
(Lao Tzu, 6th Century BC) (Translated by the researcher)

To recapitulate, this is where I have started – for the journey of this study, and with the writing of this thesis. Release control to the people, and they will be fine by themselves – that is the *dao* (the way) Lao Tzu advocated for a healthy society (co-)governed by its people. Similarly, shifting control to students and supporting them to inquire individually by themselves and collaboratively with each other – that is the idea promoted in the Chinese national curriculum for the cultivation of learner autonomy (LA). The idea was welcomed at Zia where this study was based; and the key to its implementation, as proposed, was that the management transfer control to the teachers, letting them learn about LA-oriented instruction by exercising their own teacher autonomy (TA) through personal experience and collaborative exploratory practice of such a way of learning.

The idea is sound, but questions arose then: How realisable would it be? How would the teachers give control to students? How would the management relinquish control to the teachers? More importantly, in their (both the teachers' and the managers') views, what is autonomy? Would what they say converge or diverge with what they do? And how should the convergences and divergences be explained?

These questions were then developed into the research questions (see also Section

2.5) and guided this study. Chapter Four has reported in detail the findings about these questions, and this chapter will discuss the findings in reference to relevant literature. The chapter is organised in eight sections: an overview of the findings about one individual teacher at the beginning, a summary at the end, and the body of the discussion in six aspects: knowledge about the notion of LA (5.2), beliefs in learners' capacity for autonomy (5.3), practices of control release and support provision (5.4), reflections on the practices (5.5), convergences and divergences between cognitions and practices (5.6), and understanding the activity in the wider sociocultural context (5.7).

5.1 An overview of the findings

To start with, I would like to present an overall picture of one teacher (T2), who, according to my judgement, was the most LA-supportive in terms of giving control to students, showing strong teacher autonomy in herself, and demonstrating sound rationalisation for her practices. The reason for this is that such a positive example was indeed among the most exciting finding from this study, which demonstrated how LA could be effectively promoted in this context.

Teacher 2's students were given opportunities to take control of their learning in various ways. They were involved in such decision-making as nominating students to recite a text and evaluate their performance; they were encouraged to use the target language to express their ideas and share real life experience with peer classmates and the teacher; they worked individually by themselves and collaboratively in groups, processing new language input, monitoring their own progress and that of peers, co-constructing ideas and useful expressions for writing, peer editing and evaluating, and rewriting on the basis of peer feedback. Moreover, some more able students chose their own homework while assigning homework to their less able group members and following up with checking their work, giving feedback and reporting the results to the teacher (see details in Pattern 2 in Section 4.2.1, Pattern 2 in 4.2.2, and Table 13 in 4.2.4).

Meanwhile, Teacher 2 demonstrated a strong degree of teacher autonomy of her own in the following ways. She appeared confident and held firmly her position as the one taking control of her own teaching; she placed the communicative function of language over everything else showing no concern about students'

examination results; she insisted on using English as the medium of instruction as much as possible with confidence in her students' ability to understand; she justified with sound rationales her unique teaching technique (of "talk to yourself") the effectiveness of which was questioned /doubted by her colleagues; she viewed the school-promoted classroom instruction model critically and adopted it selectively and creatively to accommodate the conditions of her own students.

The above practices were thoughtful and intentional. Teacher 2 shared her understanding and beliefs about LA as follows: autonomy is a personal inner strength which allows one, regardless of external conditions, to act confidently in an independent manner; certainly all students have the demonstrated capacity or potential for some degree of autonomy; as long as the teacher releases control to students and supports them appropriately, they can take control and even do better than the teacher expects; being involved in classroom decision-making empowers students to exercise their agency; real life conversation highlights the communicative nature of language and creates opportunities for authentic language use, and sharing life stories with the teacher furthers brings in feeling of rapport and empowerment; individual study emphasises the value of independence, and group work encourages collaboration and caters for individual differences, allowing the weak to participate and the strong to take leadership or 'go the extra mile'.

As to an explanation for the above findings, consideration may be given to the following aspects. Firstly, Teacher 2 was an autonomous learner since early school life and in her teaching career – for instance, when she had no partner to speak English with, she talked to herself as an alternative; she kept up reading widely by herself to expand her general knowledge so as to handle various questions that students might raise; and she also readily picked up useful ideas shared by colleagues and school managers and put them into her own practice. Secondly, she was a reflective practitioner (Farrell, 2007): she valued reflection as part of her profession, and exhibited so in the peer observation and feedback giving with colleagues and the post-lesson discussions with me. Thirdly, autonomy had been an important family value of hers – she reported that her mother encouraged her to act independently since childhood and figure out the

problems when things went wrong. Lastly, several other factors further increased her professional confidence, including her leadership at Zia as the English Programme Manager, recognition by the principal and her department as the best English teacher, and complimentary remarks from her students for her teaching excellence.

Now I have portrayed a picture of the promotion of LA at Zia in relation to one successful teacher. The picture looks positive: the teacher had a clear understanding of the nature of LA and how it could be developed through control shift; she herself was an autonomous learner and teacher, and trusted her students' autonomous ability; her LA-supportive beliefs informed her instructional practices, in which decisions she provided opportunities for learner control as well as necessary support; her practices were well recognised by the school managers, her colleagues and students, which in turn further enhanced her professional confidence and autonomy. This picture also provides sound evidence for a successful exercise of the teacher's own mediating roles in coping with the contextual and institutional constraints to create space for LA: do the doable, change the changeable, and explore more.

However, it must be stated that such a picture, while accurate, was not typical. The whole situation was far more complex, and in effect not so exciting. Its complexity involves all the parties (people) positioned at different levels of the chain of control (with the principal at the top and students at the bottom); and it was manifest in various facets, concerning knowledge of the concept, beliefs in learners' autonomous capacity, practices of control shift and support provision, teachers' reflections on their practices, and the wider socio-cultural context in which the activity of LA promotion was undertaken. Next, I will discuss these aspects in detail, and relate my findings to those in other studies.

5.2 Knowledge of the *what, why,* and *how* about learner autonomy

5.2.1 What is learner autonomy?

The understanding of the concept at Zia shows general agreement with key aspects of LA widely accepted in LA literature. The agreement is reflected in such views (of the managers and the teachers expressed in the interviews) as learners'

agency in and motivation for learning, mental and behavioural control over learning, learning how to learn, and independent and collaborative learning (Sections 4.1.1.2, 4.1.2.2, & 4.3.1). To some extent, these views incorporate the much-discussed four dimensions of LA as proposed by Benson (1997) and Oxford (2003): psychologically, learners are willing to learn (Littlewood, 1996); technically, learners manage the learning process (Holec, 1981); socially, learners learn collaboratively with others (Dam et al., 1990; Kohonen, 1992; Little, 1996) and use available tools to mediate dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987); and a political sense is somewhat indicated in the power and control distribution in the classroom (Oxford, 2003). Also, most of these points are frequently seen in the Chinese LA literature – for example, Yu (2001) on learners' willingness, Pang (2001) on managing the learning process, and Xu (2012) on collaborative autonomous learning. Tracing further back, these views are well established in the origins of LA both in the West and in China, including learners' desire and ability to learn, learners as the agents for learning, experiential and collaborative learning (see Sections 2.1.1 & 2.1.2). On such a basis, it can be tentatively said that the fundamental tenets of LA have remained much the same throughout the world and over time, most of which are expressed in the intended curriculum of Zia in terms of their promotion of LA. In short, as Little (1995) has said, there is in principle nothing novel about learner autonomy (p. 179).

However, disparities do also exist between the interpretations of LA at Zia and expressions in the LA literature, involving the following phrases: *discipline, responsibility, making choices or decisions, self-study or inquiry,* and *learners' right*. The word *discipline* has not been much seen in the Western LA literature, but appeared as a key aspect of LA highlighted by the principal in this study (see Section 4.1.1.2). The reason for this is mainly linguistic. As explained in the section, what the principal meant by *self-discipline* (*zì lǜ*) actually referred to one's ability to control emotions and behaviours; yet in English the word carries more about training people to obey rules or correcting people with punishment – a key meaning of discipline as given in widely-used general dictionaries; for example, the first definition in *Encarta* (Rooney, 1999, p. 537) is "making people obey rules"; the second is "order and control"; and self-control is denoted in the fourth and seventh entries.

As to *responsibility*, while recognised as a key element in Holec's (1981) classic definition of LA, this did not stand out as prominent in this study. First of all, the principal did not mention the word proactively in the discussion focusing on the meaning of LA; when it was elicited subsequently, the principal said that "those students who have a sense of responsibility learn not only what they are interested in, but also what they feel obliged to learn, for such considerations as their own future, family expectations or societal needs" (P.I – see Section 4.1.1.2). Such an interpretation of responsibility seems resonant with his other terms *self-discipline*, or *commitment*, neither of which equates with *learners' ability to take charge of one's own learning* (Holec, 1981, p. 3). In another case of a post-lesson discussion, one teacher perceived responsibility as an attribute of leadership, and illustrated with an example: "When the teacher assigns a task for groupwork, students with a strong sense of responsibility respond quickly and actively to organise their group to get down to the work" (T1.L1.PLD). In both comments (of the principal and Teacher 1), the so-called responsibility seems to be more an obligation for something or somebody else than the control over one's own learning.

With the idea of learners' freedom or ability to *make decisions or choices*, findings from this study seem significantly different from a number of existing empirical studies on teachers' beliefs about LA (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Barnard & Li, 2016b; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Camilleri, 2007; Camilleri, 1999; Shahsavari, 2014). While it is identified as the most acknowledged feature of LA in these studies, the teachers' (explicit) awareness of learners' decision-making is found surprisingly little in the present study. Responses to the interview question on the definition of LA did not show a direct connection between autonomy and decision making or learners' choices, except for one teacher's (T6) metaphorical comment – she compared LA to a learners' kingdom, in which they should "have the say" or "be the decision maker" (*"wo de wang guo wo shuo le suan"* in Chinese) (T6.I – see Section 4.3.1); but she did not go any further to specify what decisions students should make or what choices they should be given. As to the reason for the contradictory findings, the data collection instruments may have played an important part, with questionnaires adopted in the above-mentioned studies and interviews in the present one. Taking into account the

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informative/receptive nature of questionnaires and the generative/productive one of interviews, it may be wondered whether the surveyed teachers originally considered LA as learners' ability for decision making, or whether the questionnaire items that led the teachers to such awareness (at least partially). Such an explanation lends support to another study co-conducted by myself (Wang & Wang, 2016), in which salient points from different data mismatch; for example, the social aspect of LA appeared the second recurrent aspect in the questionnaire, but was not reflected in the interviews. Furthermore, although the teachers did not define LA as closely related to students making decisions or choices, some teachers' practices involved opportunities for students' doing so, and their perceptions of their own practices differed considerably (see Section 4.3.3 *Choices and decision making*).

The next noteworthy point concerns *self-study* or *self-inquiry* (*zi xue*), a highlighted idea in the executive director's (ED) interpretation of LA and interchangeably used by him with the term *autonomy*. According to the ED, student self-study should be conducted prior to teachers' teaching, which indicates learning by oneself without teachers' intervention. In this sense, the ED's point contradicts Little's (1990) clarifying statement that "LA is **not** a synonym for self-instruction" or "learning without a teacher" (p. 7, emphasis in original); but lends support to the common view about LA held by the teachers in several studies conducted in the Asian contexts (e.g., Barnard & Li, 2016b; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Chan, 2003; Nguyen, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). Nevertheless, such a finding is not surprising, and the reason probably lies in that the Chinese equivalent of autonomy is *zi zhu*, the first part of which (*zi*) means exactly *self*. Consequently, this linguistic feature of autonomy contained in the Chinese translation bestows much *self-* nature on the concept, and invites various interpretations of autonomy in expressions prefixed with self (see Cui, 2013).

With respect to LA as *a learners' right* or more generally *a human right*, while this viewpoint has been widely acknowledged in Western LA literature (Allford & Pachler, 2007; Benson, 2000, 2001, 2011; Kenny, 1993; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003), it was not much in evidence in the present study – in effect, there was no explicit statement about this from either the managers or the teachers. Such a finding is not unexpected, as my personal experience (as an insider academic

member in the Chinese educational system for over twenty years) allows me to consider that this topic (of students' or teachers' rights) is indeed not frequently discussed among teachers, or of much concern to many. In addition, research on this topic – mainly theoretical discussion – also shows that autonomy as a students' (or teachers') right has not been sufficiently acknowledged in the current Chinese educational system, and thus there have been voices calling strongly for "returning the right to students" and allowing them to make important decisions about their own learning (Ba, 2013; Lao, 2015; Liu, 2004; Yu, 2013; Zhu, 2016). Moreover, a notable issue here relates to the English words "right" and "power", which are homophones in Chinese sharing the same pin-yin "*quan li*" but in different characters – "权利" and "权力". Conceptual ambiguity and interchangeable use of terminologies are detected in Chinese literature; for example, Jin (2008) placed teachers' and learners' right in the title of her article, but actually discussed the power or control shift between teacher and student. As both terms are so closely related to the concept of autonomy, it would be worthwhile to pay them further attention and clarification.

So far, I have discussed some striking features in relation to the meaning of LA, in terms of both the convergences and the divergences between findings of the present study and those in the existing literature. Although commonality is shown to some extent in the understanding of LA across the school – the principal, the ED, and each individual teacher –a prevalent definition of LA is lacking at Zia shared by them all, and the various definitions they gave derive from diverse sources. For example, Teacher 1's view of LA as "student-centred education" was, as she said, picked up from a teacher trainer in an external (district-wide) peer observation opportunity (T1. I); Teacher 2's perception of autonomy as "an inner strength for independent action" was acquired from her personal experience and reflection (T2. I); and Teacher 5's idea of "I want to learn" was quoted directly from the principal (see Section 4.3.1). Such lack of a shared definition of LA seems to indicate that, although the importance of teachers' beliefs for LA implementation was much stressed at Zia in theory, the concept could not have been explicitly defined. This could become a hindrance to its effective operation, as for the implementation of any innovative idea, an explicit shared understanding of the idea is vital (Wedell, 2009).

5.2.2 Why learner autonomy?

It has been widely agreed in the language education field that the development of LA is a universally legitimate and desirable educational goal (Benson, 2011; Little, 1991), with positive impacts on various aspects involving language learning, learning in general, personal development, learners' right, and democratic societies (Benson, 2012; Cotterall, 1995; Crabbe, 1993; Littlewood, 1996; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003). The findings in this study support this agreement generally, in that both the school managers and the teachers expressed high appreciation of the value of LA and the significance of making it a key curricular goal. However, their recognition of the different aspects varied, with some aspects much stressed while some others little mentioned.

Specifically, the principal and the ED acknowledged the benefits of LA for effective learning in general as well as students' holistic lifelong development, but they did not relate it to language learning in particular, the point that LA fosters a free communicator (Littlewood, 1996) not mentioned. Given the educational background of the principal and the ED (neither specialising in language education), the lack of connection of LA to the language domain is understandable. Yet this is probably worth attention, since the administrators' emphasis (or lack of emphasis) on the idea can be a significant influence on teachers' perceptions and implementation of the idea. In effect, such influence was somewhat in evidence, as the communicative dimension of language learning seemed not much highlighted by the majority of the teacher participants, in either their perceptions or practices. As to the other two points in relation to learners' right to make free choices (Cotterall, 1995; Crabbe, 1993) and participate in democratic societies (Palfreyman & Smith, 2003), while the former was unmentioned, the latter was indicated in the sense that development of autonomy involves "students' democratic management of their class", and "teachers' democratic management of the school" (ED.I). The lack of emphasis on the values of LA for personal rights and societal construction lends support to Huang's (2007) claim that the political and social dimensions of LA have not received much attention in the Chinese educational context.

5.2.3 How to develop learner autonomy?

This section discusses the proposed approaches to LA in the intended curriculum – that is, the guidelines and operational principles from the principal and the ED, both of which highlighted the importance of transferring control from teacher to student – while the actual approaches that the teachers adopted will be discussed separately later in Section 5.4.2. Overall, the managers' views conform to the following claims in the literature: "It is the learner who does the learning" (Dam, 2011); therefore teachers must release control to the learners (Candy, 1991; Voller, 1997), and provide the learners with a safe and supportive environment (Benson, 2011); in the meantime risks should be encouraged, and errors and failures be tolerated (Holec, 1980, p. 42).

With respect to the classroom implementation of LA, researchers have suggested various guidelines, highlighting learner involvement, learner reflection, target language use, opportunities for choices or options, and learner support (Benson, 2003; Dam, 2011; Little, 2006). In reference to these guidelines, learner involvement is comprehensively reflected in the ED's model, in that learners are involved in the learning process of self-inquiry, sharing learning outcomes, providing peer feedback, and internalisation (see Section 4.1.2.3). In contrast, the model does not show concern about target language use. As explained earlier in Section 5.2.2, an obvious reason is that the ED did not specialise in language and the model was a school-wide promotion, not particularly focusing on language lessons. As to opportunities for choices and learner support, while mentioned, these two aspects seemed not substantially operationalised in terms of what choices to offer or in what ways to support students. Some of these absent or vaguely presented aspects turned out to be weak areas exposed in teachers' practices, which are to be further discussed in Section 5.4.2.

LA researchers have also suggested a series of concrete learner control actions in an autonomous learning process, including identifying needs, setting goals, choosing materials and learning methods and strategies, defining progressions, monitoring learning process, and evaluating or assessing learning outcomes

(Holec, 1981; Pang, 2001; Reinders, 2010). An examination of the ED's model against the series of learner control actions reveals that the model does specify learners' peer-monitoring and assessment/evaluation (Holec, 1981; Pang, 2001; Reinders, 2010), but fails to clarify learners' control over such aspects as learning needs, goals, material, methods and strategies, and progressions. Furthermore, the monitoring and evaluation seem to be focusing mostly on what is learnt in an individual lesson or a specific learning unit, not showing much consideration of learning on a long-term basis or a macro level. Also identified in the LA literature are some risks or pitfalls in the actual operation of control shifting (Chene, 1983; Dam, 2011), the continuum nature of the teacher/student control distribution (Candy, 1991; Voller, 1997), and a gradual feature in releasing more control to students (Nunan, 1997). These considerations are not much reflected in the project promoted at Zia, which again, as mentioned earlier, may impact on teachers' practices, in either a supporting or hindering manner.

I have now discussed the control shift nature of the intended curriculum as shown in the principal's guidelines and the ED's practical model against LA-focused principles, learner control actions and operational pitfalls in the relevant literature. These aspects will be further discussed later in Section 5.4.2 in relation to the teachers' classroom practice. Next, I will move on to discuss the attitudes towards one's autonomous ability – to be specific, the managers towards the teachers' and the teachers towards the students'.

5.3 Beliefs in learners' capacity for autonomous learning

To develop learner autonomy, it is crucial that the teacher has confidence in learners' capacity to be autonomous (Benson, 2011) – "trust in the human organism", in Candy's (1991, p. 232) words. However, this is not easily done in reality, as Dam (2011) cautions, after over 30 years' personal experience in the field of developing LA, it still remains a major issue that teachers "lack sufficient confidence in their learners' ability to be able to take over responsibility" (p. 49). With respect to this issue, the teachers at Zia showed a mixture of varied attitudes towards students' autonomous ability, which cannot easily be put in a simple dichotomy between positive and negative. There were extreme opinions of absolute trust (e.g., "I certainly believe all students have the potential to be

autonomous" by T2), strong distrust (e.g., "I just don't trust them anyhow" by T5), and fairly moderate (and comprehensive) comments judging students differently according to their academic performance (e.g., "most good students can control themselves well, but the weak ones have very poor self-control" by T7). There were also changeable or contradictory points of view expressed by one teacher. Specifically, some teachers presented contrasting views before and after seeing students' performances in the individual or collaborative learning activities; for example, Teacher 6 claimed generally that "students certainly have great potential for autonomy" (T6.L1.PLD), but when reflecting on her students' performance in the peer teaching, she said "you see, they couldn't catch the key points at all" (T6.L2.PLD). Differently, some other teachers felt more confidence about their students' autonomy as their practices proceeded; as Teacher 4 commented on her student-led peer-teaching session (see Section 4.2.3), she did not have confidence in her students at the beginning, but students performed well beyond her expectation, and she was "amazed" at what they had done all by themselves (see Section 4.3.3).

Such findings of the teachers' attitudes towards learners' autonomy do not support a fairly positive view as reported in Chan (2003), Al-Shaqsi (2009), or Bullock (2011) , or a rather negative one as in Balçıkanlı (2010). Although mixed views (of positive, negative and unsure) are reported in various ways in Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) and the series of studies in Barnard and Li (2016b), simple comparisons of the summative results are not very meaningful due to the different data collection instruments adopted. The teachers' views in the present study are based on qualitative data gained through interviews and post-lesson discussions, while most of the results in existing literature rely largely on quantitative evidence obtained via questionnaires. In effect, in studies which further probed teachers' views by following up the questionnaire results with interviews (e.g., Barnard & Li, 2016b; Chan, 2003), inconsistent findings are disclosed and give the sense that the teachers' answers tend to be more positive when giving general opinions, but more negative when relating specifically to students' autonomous behaviours (see Chan, 2003; Wang & Wang, 2016).

An overview of this issue raises the question how teachers perceive the various conditions in the real world, which always contain both opportunities and

challenges. Focusing on the issue of students, this has been reported in many studies as one of the major constraints hindering teachers' implementation of LA (Al Asmari, 2013; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Ding, 2013; Shahsavari, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2016). A noteworthy point is that, although gaps do exist on an individual basis regarding students' ability (in terms of learning aptitude, attitude, or achievement, for example), the average level of students on a collective basis (e.g., a class) should be more or less the same in a given institution (unless they are differentiated by levels, which is not the case of Zia). Given such circumstances, when the teachers' general views differ distinctly, what makes the difference seems more a matter of the way in which the teachers view their students, rather than the nature of the students themselves. Put more generally, it is a matter of *one's way of thinking*, rather than *what is actually being thought*; or more simply, a matter of *how* rather than *what*.

By this point, perhaps the teachers should pause (their so-titled LA-oriented action) to ask: Do I truly want students to take control? Do I genuinely believe that they can? This is vital, because, if so, they are more likely to seek – internally – for ways and actions towards achieving the goal (in case of not yet, they may reflect for improvement in further actions); otherwise, they are more likely to seek –externally – for excuses for no (or no further) action.

Transferring the issue to a higher level, perhaps the managers should also pause their LA-intended teacher-training/supporting programme to ask whether or not they realise that the development of autonomous learners requires autonomous teachers, or whether they believe genuinely that the teachers can take charge of their own teaching leading towards more learner autonomy? Although the examination into this issue is not so much a focus of this study as that about teachers' views on their learners, the interviews with the managers showed an element of distrust in teachers' ability to proceed with the LA implementation autonomously. An example can be seen from the ED's promotion of the LG (Learning Guide – the suggested format for teaching plan), which he intended to scrutinise and sign his approval before it was put into classroom practice, worrying that "some teachers cannot grasp the learner-centred nature, therefore cannot use the LG in the right way" (ED.I1) (see Section 4.1.2.4). Regardless of the effectiveness or practicality of such an intention, the thinking behind is

already a sign of lack of confidence in the teachers' professional autonomy. Another indication can be seen in the principal's approval of the ED's LA classroom instruction model, the rationale for which was to "avoid a short board of a bucket" (P.I) – an idiomatic expression of his concern about the less able teachers in the team (see Section 4.1.1.3).

I have now discussed the trust in learners' autonomy between the teachers and students and between the managers and the teachers (teachers as learners of LA-oriented teaching), both of which showed signs of lack of full trust in some ways. Regardless of the extent of suspicion or distrust, such an attitude is not conducive to the development of autonomy, and should therefore be discouraged. Rather, for any genuine LA-directed action, an attitude of full trust in learners' autonomy should be held as a premise.

5.4 Practices of control relinquishment and support provision

This section will examine the practices of the managers with the teachers and those of the teachers with their students, in terms of the nature of their control release and support provision.

5.4.1 Managers' practices of shifting control to, and supporting, teachers

The development of LA requires an autonomous attribute in the teachers themselves (Aoki, 2002; Benson, 2000; Huang, 2005; Little, 1995; McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2000). This requires freedom for the teachers to take control over their self-directed professional action (the teaching aspect) and professional development (the learning aspect) (Aoki, 2002; Benson, 2000; Huang, 2009; Mackenzie, 2002; McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2000, 2003c; Thavenius, 1999). In this respect, the present study presents a complex picture, which involved control shift in three dimensions: from the principal to the ED, from the principal to the teachers, and from the ED to the teachers. Among control transferring on the three levels, contradictions arose.

According to the principal, the ideal way of LA implementation, given its nature, is through constant exploratory practice and reflection of each individual, which would apply to both the ED and the teachers. On the one hand, the principal

allowed the ED to proceed with his LA instruction model, in spite of the principal's own personal belief that the adoption of any model is against the nature of LA (P.I). On the other hand, the principal emphasised the point – to me in the interview (P.I), as well as to the teachers when he attended one of the feedback-giving open discussion sessions (OD1) – that the teachers should maintain their own teaching style while learning from others through peer observations and collective discussions and reflections. In doing so, the principal demonstrated control release to both the ED and the teachers for their professional action and development, apparently unaware of any potential contradiction.

As for the ED, he devised the LA model to support teachers' professional learning about LA-focused instruction as well as their classroom teaching professional practice. Regarding the former (the learning part), control release was reflected in the teacher training sessions that were conducted in an experiential and collaborative manner. In this way, the teachers were given the opportunity to learn about such LA-oriented way of teaching by collectively reflecting on this way of learning by themselves (see Section 4.1.2.5). Regarding the latter (the practice aspect), however, the control relinquished to the teachers seemed to be reduced to some extent. This is because flexibility was allowed in the adoption of the model he suggested (e.g., the teachers could adopt selectively and make necessary adjustments to accommodate different class situations) (Section 4.1.2.3). However, the various measures he took to support teachers' implementation (Section 4.1.2.4) seemed to be dual-natured. Specifically, the peer observation and evaluation, while perhaps providing opportunities for collaborative learning among teachers, contained as well the potential for peer pressure, which could be double-edged. Similarly, while the Evaluation Standards (Section 4.1.2.4) provided practical guidelines for teachers' practices, the income-affected element that was embedded might invite or encourage superficially criteria-pleasing practices which were more likely to lead to remunerative benefits for the teacher rather than being genuinely beneficial for the intended purpose – learner autonomy. Furthermore, the impact of the provision of peer feedback, similar to that of the peer observation and evaluation, could be two-edged. It was observed that in some cases the feedback was inspirational and constructive, and teachers commented on a good collegial learning opportunity; however, on some other

occasions, tension and frustration were detected caused by such issues as power relationships among the teachers or individual personalities. A closer examination of the issues in relation to the feedback-giving sessions can be referred to (Wang, forthcoming), a book chapter which I wrote separately on using open discussions for teachers' collective reflection.

Looking carefully into the principal's general guidelines and the ED's practical model in supporting the teachers' implementation of LA, conflicts were exposed in terms of the control distribution among the principal, the ED, and the teachers. While the principal discharged a similar degree of control to both the ED and the teachers, some aspects of the ED's model, which was intended to support, seemed to restrict the teachers' freedom to a certain extent.

The above discussion seems to be generating a third type of autonomy (besides learner autonomy and teacher autonomy): managerial or institutional autonomy, which can further be separated into principal autonomy and director autonomy in this study. Given that most educational institutions are composed of a hierarchy of people with their own autonomy to be respected, such conflicts in the freedom/control allocation are unavoidable, and a balance should be sought. The key issue then is to focus on the shared vision of the institution and to determine an order of priority in this respect. This will be further discussed in the following section concerning shift of control from teachers to students.

5.4.2 Teachers' practices of shifting control to and supporting students

For the implementation of LA in classrooms, the following aspects are highlighted as key principles: learner involvement (Benson, 2003; Little, 2007b; Nunan, 1997), authentic target language use (Dam, 1995; Little, 2007b), learner awareness raising (Nunan, 1997) and reflection (Benson, 2003; Little, 2007b), genuine control release and appropriate learner support (Benson, 2011; Candy, 1991) (see Section 2.1.3). More specifically, learner involvement is manifested in a series of learner responsibilities in the learning process, including identifying needs and setting goals, selecting resources and methods, defining progression and monitoring progress, and assessing outcomes (Holec, 1981; Reinders, 2010). This section will examine the teachers' practices in terms of these LA-oriented

principles and learner responsibilities. I will first consider the aspects in which learners were involved (or not involved), then move to see the nature of the control shift and teacher support, and lastly discuss the target language use and students' awareness raising and reflection.

In reference to these learner responsibilities, the findings about Zia teachers' practices demonstrate strong feasibility of implementing LA in conventional classroom settings. The feasibility is manifested in learner involvement in various ways through the three types of shared classroom activities – presentations, collaborative group work, and peer-teaching (see Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.3) – as well as a variety of other practices reported by the teachers (see Section 4.2.4) but unobserved by me. These activities have been frequently applied and accepted as LA-orienting in published reports (e.g., Assinder, 1991; Benson & Ying, 2013; Carpenter, 1996; Chang, 2007; Chen & Hird, 2006; Dam, 1995; Deacon & Croker, 2006; Hart, 2002; Kao, 2011; McDonough, 2004; Smith, 2001; Yang, 2012).

Through these activities, students at Zia were involved in such matters as selecting their own topics and materials, inquiring individually by themselves or collaboratively with others, practising the language in communicative situations, self/peer-monitoring and providing peer feedback (see Section 4.2.5). By taking over or sharing with the teacher these responsibilities, the control of learning is to some extent shifted from teachers to students, leading towards more learner autonomy. Evidence of control shift was also seen in some students' being empowered to take the teacher's role, nominating a presenter or leading/facilitating a discussion (see Section 4.2.1), or running the whole lesson (Sections 4.2.3). Learner empowerment as such is believed as crucial for the development of LA (Benson, 2011). Furthermore, evidence was found of students' involvement in classroom management such as more able students assisting the teachers with classroom interactions or managing students' records (Sections 4.2.1 to Sections 4.2.4). This is an important feature for LA development, particularly in classroom settings, and in this respect concurs with Camilleri (1999), Balçıkanlı (2010), Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b), and several studies in Barnard and Li (2016b) which adopted Borg and Al-Busaidi's research instruments and procedures.

While the overall data on all the teacher participants' practices show a fairly positive picture of learner involvement in various dimensions as discussed above, it needs to be noted that satisfactory performances across different teachers were not evenly distributed. In contrast, the extent of control relinquishment varied considerably from teacher to teacher, with one extreme showing a great degree of control relinquishment (see Teacher 2's practices in Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.4), and the other indicating little genuine control release to students (see Teacher 6's practices in Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3). Such a finding concurs with Jing's (2013) study, which reported different findings across the three Chinese school teachers' implementation of learner-centred teaching (See Section 2.3); but differs from Nguyen (2014), who reported much-the-same and fairly unsatisfactory performances of four Vietnam university teachers regarding the development of LA (See Section 2.3). While both Jing (2013) and Nguyen (2014) are evidence-based empirical studies, Jing's findings seem more likely than Nguyen's to be representative of the general situation of an institution, due to the likelihood that individuals are more different than similar in terms of personal abilities and professional performances. Furthermore, Nguyen's conclusion is less convincing also in that only four teachers were selected to be observed out of 188 survey respondents, which left the criteria for the selection of the observees crucial to the validity of the findings. In this point, the participation in this study of all nine members of the English Department seems to represent a more comprehensive picture of school-wide LA implementation.

Furthermore, regarding the identified aspects in which control shift was apparent, it should be noted that the evidence for learners' involvement was not on a macro level over the whole course or consistently throughout a semester. Rather, the involvement was on a micro level restricted to specific activities or learning points. For example, learners' free choice in the selection of topics and materials was only seen in the pre-lesson presentations which did not constitute the major body of the class – on average, less than one tenth of the class time – and only shown in four out of the nine teachers' lessons (see Pattern 1 in Section 4.2.1). As to the aspect of peer-evaluation or assessment, what was evaluated or assessed was a performance on a very specific point rather than the learning progress over a period of time (e.g., a week or a month); and the way in which students made

the evaluations was fairly simple – mainly calling out a number to suggest a performance score. Overall, it seems that the LA-supportive aspects evidenced in this study include both "flames" and "sparks" in terms of the extent of their application; that is, in some dimensions learner involvement was well in evidence, but in some others learners were involved only to a small degree.

Meanwhile, there are also facets which are well defined as LA-featured in the literature, but lack evidence of learner involvement in this study. These are *identifying learning needs, defining the objective of a course or teaching methods, defining contents and progression* (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Reinders, 2010). The findings in relation to these unattended aspects are not surprising, as similar findings have been much reported in the existing studies, labelled as "institutional constraints" (e.g., Barnard & Li, 2016b; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Wang & Wang, 2016). In effect, in most institutional settings, requirements on many aspects of learning – such as aims, content, methods, and materials – are prescribed in the curriculum; for example, the national ministry (or provincial bureau) of education defines certain textbooks as compulsory, and a head of department may set the pace of teaching progression. Such a situation is entirely common. As Dam (2011) has pointed out, "the development of autonomy in an *institutional context* implies that it is not a question of a *help yourself* menu for what to do, neither for teachers nor for learners" (p. 41, emphasis in original). Given such realities in most institutions or classrooms which certainly (and unavoidably) contain constraints, Smith (2003b, p. 258) has called attention to the need for the teachers' professional autonomy of their own critical self-awareness of the possibilities and limitations within particular contexts. Put differently, it is the teacher's job to carefully examine the context and seek possibilities and opportunities – out of limitations and challenges – for maximum learner involvement.

If viewed from such a perspective, the findings about Zia teachers' practices can be interpreted differently and may present a more promising reality, as some teachers indeed exercised their professional teacher autonomy and created some extra learner control opportunities. For example, while the textbooks were designated by the provincial bureau of education as compulsory learning content, extra opportunities (however minor they were) were created to allow students to

go beyond the prescribed material and choose topics and materials of interest and relevance to themselves (see Pattern 1 in Section 4.2.1). Also, when adhering to the textbook, the presenter was encouraged to reproduce the text in his own words (see Pattern 2 in Section 4.2.1,). For another example, feeling the ED-suggested model was too "maths-based" to suit English lessons, some teachers sought and found an English activity which resembles maths learning – such as exercise explaining – and then adapted the model appropriately (see Section 4.2.4).

So far, the issue seems to be merging into the one that I raised earlier in Section 5.3 – for truly effective implementation of LA, a firm trust in learners' potential to be autonomous is a premise. Applying this more broadly, an unconditionally positive attitude is necessary and crucial towards all kinds of constraints or limitations – whether regarding weak students or fixed curriculum requirements. By unconditionally, my emphasis is on such a view as that no matter what the circumstances are, teachers should be determined to seek opportunities out of existing conditions: as Chene (1983) has pointed out, "even in highly teacher-controlled situations there is still some residue of learner-control; and likewise, even in the most liberal of learner-controlled situations, residual authority of the teacher may still exist" (p. 44). The fundamental issue is whether the teacher genuinely wants, and knows how, to give control to the learners and help them to take over. In this sense, Vieira (2003), McCasland and Poole (2002) and Trebbi (2003) have provided useful suggestions for addressing institutional constraints – such as allowing for "a variety of tasks and roles" and "different gains for different people" and working from "a negotiated agenda" to accommodate individual backgrounds (Trebbi, 2003, p. 235); and Huang's (2006) exploration for negotiation and mediation in a collegial atmosphere is particularly insightful for Chinese educational contexts.

Next, I will take a close look at the control shift between teachers and students, particularly in terms of its authenticity. Findings in the study diverged in this respect. On the one hand, successful examples did exist demonstrating substantial release of control to students. For example, in Teacher 2's second observed lesson, the teacher created a number of opportunities to get students involved, and the students were observed exercising their control with sufficient teacher support (see Pattern 2 in Section 4.2.2). Students were seen taking/sharing control in their

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individual work on the writing-task-related vocabulary, discussion with peers and the teacher of ideas and structure for the writing, independent (re-)writing, self- and peer-editing, as well as peer feedback. In the meantime, the teacher supported the students with the self-study worksheet, the writing outline on the PowerPoint, and a piece of sample writing about herself. Proof of the success was well shown through the observed student engagement, and the worksheet utilised in the lesson, and the peer-edited writing.

On the other hand, however, false/pseudo control release (Candy, 1991; Dam, 2011) was detected. In one example (from the first lesson of Teacher 6), after the teacher had suggested the students discuss the questions in groups, she neither allowed time for the discussion nor followed up with any support to respond to students' silence. Consequently, the so-given group discussion opportunity ended up merely as lip service by the teacher (see Pattern 11 in Section 4.2.2). In another example (from the first lesson of Teacher 3), the teacher abdicated the teaching position for students' presentations, but insisted firmly that the presentations go in the way she required. A "tug-of-war" was then observed between the insistent teacher and a stubborn student who did not follow her requirement about the way of presenting (see Pattern 7 in Section 4.2.2). In this case, although the teacher retreated herself physically to the side of the room, seeming to have committed the control to students, in actuality she still tightly withheld her teacher prerogative as the commander, which made her ostensible control resignation of little real effect but merely a motion of "pseudo-autonomy" without "commitment or conviction" (Candy, 1991, pp. 237-238).

In addition, disguised control release existed in the form of invisible teacher control embedded in student-led activities. In the same example with Teacher 3 as portrayed above, for both the presentations and the peer-comment sessions, the students explicitly signalled what he or she was about to do, for example, "Here is Group X's report" (see Pattern 7 in Section 4.2.2). In this case, the teacher did not utter a word to direct students, yet the procedure that the students followed and the standardised signals seemed very much teacher-trained products. A similar example was found in Teacher 4's second lesson featuring peer teaching. More strikingly in terms of its student-led nature, the lesson was almost completely student-directed, during which the teacher watched on the side; she said almost

nothing except for a minor reminder about the rules for the ask-and-answer session (see Section 4.2.3). On the surface, given that the proportion of student talk to teacher talk was almost 100%, it could be said that the student control predominated. However again, the whole lesson ran in a highly structured manner, one group following another using exactly the same format. It was assumed then (and later confirmed) that the format was given by the teacher in her previous lesson. Taking the teachers' invisible control over the way of the student-controlled activity, certainly the teacher's control actually increased while that of the students decreased. By pointing out this issue of invisible teacher control, by no means am I suggesting the procedure or format (in both examples) provided by the teachers were unnecessary, unimportant or detrimental. Rather, I wish to explore and expose all the possible control-affecting elements (however minor or trivial) to the people concerned or of interest for further consideration and examination whether (and to what extent and in what ways) these elements are LA-enhancing or hindering. After all, a highly structured way does not tend to align with autonomy.

Until now, I have examined in depth the teachers' relinquishment of control, which exposes both genuine control shift and various pitfalls in the actual operation. These pitfalls are delicate to handle but must not be neglected, as they may alter – slightly or significantly – the nature of teachers' practices enhancing or constraining the development of LA. Furthermore, I want to emphasise here again that there are two key elements in the classroom control transition involving two parties: "the deliberate surrendering of certain prerogatives by the teacher accompanied by the concomitant acceptance of responsibility by the learner or learners" (Candy, 1991, p. 9). Candy's statement portrays such a picture as a parent or a coach training a child or a learner to catch a ball: successful transition of the ball requires seamless collaboration between the two – one willing to give and the other willing to take – and a good trainer knows how ready or prepared the learner is and what (and how much) support should be provided.

Surrounding the issue of learner support, I want to refer again to the two examples presented earlier regarding the procedure that Teachers 3 and 4 provided, to both of which two labels – opposite in nature – can be attached: reserved teacher control (negative) or learner support (positive). What determines the nature of the

procedure is the appropriateness of the support. In other words, what support is needed, and how much? How much is sufficient but not excessive? To clarify, on the one hand, there is no doubt that support is necessary and important; but on the other, attention should be paid that students are not over-supported, nor does the teacher hold control back with the excuse that students need support. An example of excessive support was found in Teacher 6's first lesson regarding students' preparation for the pre-lesson presentations. The teacher explained in the post-lesson discussion that how she "supported" the presenter to prepare for the presentation: she let the presenter choose his own materials and then bring to her for "quality control" and "training", by which she first examined if the material was too easy or too difficult for the student, let him rehearse the presentation, and then corrected his "not-quite-right" pronunciations and intonations (T6.L1.PLD) (see Pattern 3 in Section 4.2.1). While such practices might have resulted in students' better performances in the presentations, it is wondered whether such training falls into the pitfall that the teacher always wants to get students right (Candy, 1991, p. 232). In other words, the teacher revealed fairly low tolerance for students' errors or mistakes. Such practices contradict the important principle for learning by "trial and error" or learning from mistakes, which has been widely acknowledged as crucial for LA development (Holec, 1980; Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989). Given the nature of autonomy, perhaps what teachers need to consider more is how to stop themselves from training students, rather than seeking the best way of doing it.

In contrast to excessive support, also disclosed from the findings was insufficient support. To illustrate this point in the ball-catching activity presented earlier, the ball drops when the trainer tosses it, but the learner does not catch it (either because of unwillingness or inability). Likewise, if teachers give away their control, but students do not want to or are not able to take over, there would not be any (or much) improvement of students' autonomy. An example was found in Teacher 1's second lesson when a student kept himself out of the group discussion working on the questions silently by himself. About this student, the teacher commented that "he is very peculiar, often showing little interest in group activities; but he is actually very smart and has a good academic record" (T1.L2.PLD). In this example, the teacher released her control to students for

group discussion, but the released control did not exert the supposed effect on this particular student, as he refused to take the opportunity due to lack of interest. Meanwhile, no other action was seen from the teacher's side to encourage this student to participate, nor were there other options available for the student – except to exert autonomy by doing the questions by himself!

This is worth attention because it is not just an issue between this single teacher and this particular student, but a common perception among many teachers that in the conduct of groupwork there are always some (a greater or smaller number) students appearing to be inactive. While the reasons for such lack of cooperation could be diverse and complicated, one thing is clear that the needs of these students were not yet appropriately accommodated and further support was needed, either encouragement for participation, extra facilitating tools, or an alternative way of working on the same task.

Now, I will move on to discuss the target language use in the teachers' LA-oriented activities. While authentic target language use has been recognised as an important feature in the development of language learner autonomy (Dam, 1995; Little, 2007b), it turned out to be a rather weak area in Zia teachers' general practices. By authentic, it means the language learning tasks/activities are real-life-related rather than just learning-material-based. Evidence in this respect was scarce (according to my judgement of the data), reflected thinly in only three episodes of two teachers' lessons (T2.L2.O; T8.L2.O). The two episodes in Teacher 2's lesson were a social chat that she had with her students at the beginning of the class, and the sharing of school life between her and her students as well as among the students themselves (see Pattern 2 in Section 4.2.2). The one in Teacher 8's lesson occurred in the pre-lesson presentation session when a student (the top one in terms of English academic record) acted as a facilitator leading the presentation and discussion (see Pattern 1 in Section 4.2.1). Although the amount of language she produced was not abundant, given that she was using the language to fulfil the role she played in the real life setting then, it might well be considered as an authentic practice.

Except for the episodes identified above, the target language use involved in most other activities was either textbook-based or artificial language focusing on the

given topics in various situations. Such a finding is not surprising and concurs with several other studies conducted in contexts where English is not a native language (e.g., Ding, 2013; Nguyen, 2014). After all, in most Asian countries where English is neither a native nor a second language, authentic use opportunities are limited and demanding, especially when also taking into account the language learning environment in which the teachers themselves learned English.

Further regarding the use of language, another notable issue was the large degree of Chinese language use as the medium of instruction and in explaining various "language points" (phonological, lexical, or syntactical). Evidence of such was seen widely throughout a number of major LA-featured activities, including the student-led peer teaching in the three lessons reported in Section 4.2.3, and comprehensive group activities incorporating a series of LA-involved actions from discussion, presentation, peer-feedback, to evaluation (see Patterns 6, 7, & 9 in Section 4.2.2 in relation Teachers 1, 3, 4, & 8). Such a feature regarding EFL teaching in Chinese context is again unsurprising, as the grammar- and exam-focused language teaching/learning style has been much reported in the existing literature (Chen & Hird, 2006; Wang, 2011b; Yan, 2015) – as Yan (2015) highlights in the title of her article such teacher' dilemmas as "[w]e can't change much unless the exams change" (p. 5). By raising this issue, I have no intention to make a judgement or discussion on the significance (or insignificance) of grammar, language points or exams. Rather, the point I wish to emphasise is the communicative value of the target language in the development of language learner autonomy. While learning and practice of discrete points of language is necessary and certainly useful, it is somewhat concerning that too much focus on separate language points may risk sacrificing opportunities for students to learn the language as a whole and use it for autonomous free communication.

Apart from target language use, two other aspects lacking evidence in Zia teachers' practices were raising learners' awareness of and encouraging reflection on such autonomous learning, both of which have been identified by LA researchers as crucial in the LA development (Benson, 2003; Little, 2007b; Nunan, 1997). Although LA promotion was running school-widely in a fairly high-key manner, it seemed that the emphasis was much on the practical

operational details (such as group division and the utilisation of the PFM Points), with little explicit explanation or stress on the conceptual understanding, such as what LA is, why this is important for students, and what key issues should be addressed towards its effective realisation. Due to the absence of such explicit awareness-raising before actually implementing LA activities, understandably there was little evidence showing teachers' efforts in encouraging or guiding students to have regular reflections on the learning process. It should be admitted that the above statement was based on the observed data of limited number of lessons on an individual teacher basis (at most four). Hence it was possible that there may have been awareness-raising and reflection-guiding conversations which I missed catching. Yet apparently these are relatively weak dimensions in the teachers' LA promotion. Therefore they might be worth more attention.

Now I have discussed in depth Zia teachers' practices in relation to the shift of control – both teachers' relinquishing and learners' taking over, as well as the support that the teachers provided for their learners – and the target language use and learner reflection in the LA-oriented activities. To conclude this section, while releasing control to students and supporting them to take over the responsibility are two key steps towards the development of LA, the teachers' actual operations in the classroom diverged in this nature, with some leading towards more LA as intended but some others deviating from or even going against the nature of LA. In addition, Zia teachers' LA practices showed weakness in the dimensions of authentic target language use, raising students' awareness of and encouraging reflections on autonomous learning. Next, I will move on to discuss the teachers' reflections on their own practices of LA development.

5.5 Reflections on the practices

In this section, I will discuss the teachers' reflections on their practices, by which I refer to the rationales that the teachers provided for their classroom actions in the post-lesson discussions – including the one-on-one discussions with me and the departmental open discussions among themselves (findings in Section 4.3.3 particularly) – that is, their "thinking" or "thoughts" about their specific lesson plans and implementation. To facilitate the discussion, I will divide the various teacher actions into two categories according to their impact on the development

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of LA: LA-facilitating and LA-hindering.

5.5.1 Reflections on LA-facilitating actions

The teachers' reflections on their actions in this study showed that while they carried out the same activity or took actions of similar nature, their knowledge or awareness of the impact of the activity or actions on LA development varied considerably and demonstrated strong uniqueness of each individual teacher, perhaps based on very diverse principles (Breen et al., 2001).

Taking the frequently shared pre-lesson presentation for example, with various LA-facilitating elements embedded in the activity (see summary of Section 4.2.1), the teachers' awareness of the LA value in their own actions ranged from highly conscious to almost unconscious. Specifically, Teacher 2 provided sound reasons for her action of letting students choose the presenter and the text (see *Choices and decision making* in Section 4.2.3). In contrast, Teacher 9 expressed little connection between peer assessment (see Pattern 3 in Section 4.2.1) and the possible positive impact of action of such kind on enhancing student responsibility (see *Evaluation* in Section 4.3.3). Furthermore, Teacher 3 illustrated a third type of teacher cognition in this respect between full and little consciousness: while getting the presenter to teach vocabulary (see Pattern 1 in Section 4.2.1), she associated it only with vocabulary enlargement initially, yet claimed it as a LA-focused activity later after some eliciting questions from me (see *Peer teaching* in Section 4.3.3). The difference between Teachers 9 and 3 lay in that during the discussions of their practices, the former denied my presumption (of getting students to suggest a PFM score so as to empower learners and encourage their involvement) and adhered to her original thinking (of nothing much special but to have fun), while the latter changed her comments during the discussion (from "just to get them learn more vocabulary" to "it does help them to take more initiative") (T3.L1.PLD). It may therefore be assumed that Teacher 3's knowledge of LA in this respect was probably hidden somewhere in her mind and was then drawn out. Another example which caught my attention was Teacher 5's comments on the "teaching outline" that she provided with students for the group peer teaching activity (see Section 4.2.3). While the outline appeared (to me) an appropriate support in facilitating students' discussion and delivery, the teacher

expressed her constant (and stubborn) concern about students' independent inquiry, saying that she "cannot help supplying a cane" (T5.L3.PLD).

In the above examples, while the teachers' actions were all potentially conducive to LA, their thinking differed greatly, ranging from explicit and implicit to little awareness of what they were routinely doing, as well as contradictory knowledge and practice in terms of the LA-orienting nature (as in Teacher 5's case). Although teacher cognition researchers have widely agreed that teachers' beliefs provide a basis and guide for action (Arnett & Turnbull, 2008; Borg, 2011; Isikoglu, Basturk, & Karaca, 2009), it would seem from the above discussion that some teachers, while having taken some relevant actions, could not fully articulate their actions or readily recognise the value embedded in the actions. In Teacher 3's case, some of the eliciting questions in the post lesson discussion facilitated her to some extent to discover the LA-enhancing elements in her instructional decisions and actions. Such a finding concurs with Feryok (2013) that "teachers implicitly know more than they can readily articulate, as the research process pushed the teacher to articulate his cognitions" (p. 213). In this sense, it seems important to raise or enhance the teachers' knowledge about their classroom actions. Otherwise, the actions they undertake may not eventually lead towards LA. In the studies to date on teacher cognition about LA, few have focused specifically on teachers' awareness of the LA nature of their potentially LA-orienting actions. Perhaps the present study could make a modest contribution in this respect.

5.5.2 Reflections on LA-hindering actions

The discussion in Section 5.5.1 suggests that although some practices were potentially LA-enhancing in nature, teachers' recognition of that value differed. In a similar manner, divergent teachers' thinking was disclosed in relation to actions that seemed to hinder the development LA. And again, the divergences ranged from a clear awareness of "pitfalls" in LA implementation to little knowledge of LA-detrimental elements in the actions taken, as well as self-contradictory comments on students' performances in autonomous or collaborative inquiry.

Evidence of the first type was not ample but worthy of mention. In one of the

open discussions (OD2), Teacher 2 expressed her strong objection to teacher giving continual instructions during student individual or group work time, yet in her second lesson, she was observed doing precisely this for what she claimed to be students' independent work (see Pattern 2 in Section 4.2.2). In the post-lesson discussion, she referred to this episode as "deeply-rooted occupational inclination of teachers" which can be hardly "rooted out" – even if she was quite aware of this normally (see *Self-study* in Section 4.3.3). Teacher 2's case showed such a type of relationship between teacher cognition and practice: the teacher was aware of a potential pitfall associated with her pedagogical intention – teachers' habitual control over students' learning in this case – in reality, however, she failed to avoid it (not completely at least) and did what she perceived as unadvisable.

In a different case, Teacher 3's reflections on the "tug-of-war" between her and the presenter (see Pattern 8 in Section 4.2.2) illustrated a second type of teacher cognition in relation to actions potentially inhibiting autonomy. She demonstrated little awareness of and knowledge about several LA-discouraging actions taking place at the time, including: limited flexibility in the way of presenting; insufficient support for the presenter in a situation more stressful than usual (with a number of observers in the class); and no accommodation for the presenter's special needs (he was a peculiar student often behaving differently from others, as the teacher commented). (See *Presentation* in Section 4.3.3). Furthermore, Teacher 6 presented a third type of teacher thinking with self-contradictory beliefs about students' potential for autonomy. On the one hand, she claimed that teachers should give students plenty of opportunities for students to exercise their agency and that they certainly had the ability to do so; on the other hand, she concluded – after having observed students' peer teaching – that students failed to exercise the given control satisfactorily (see *Peer teaching* in Section 4.3.3)

To summarise this section, while the teachers' actions mentioned in the above examples were to some extent hindering autonomy, the teachers' perceptions varied considerably, falling into three categories comprising sound rationalisation, little awareness, and contradictory beliefs. As mentioned in Section 5.5.1, teachers' thinking guides their actions. Concerning potential risks in the implementation of LA, if teachers have a clear consciousness, they may possibly take some actions to avoid them (even though it might not be easy). Otherwise,

they may possibly act to some extent against the nature of LA. As to the inconsistent contradictory views held by one teacher (as in Teacher 6's case), practices guided by such thinking could be quite confusing or even misleading.

5.5.3 Reflections on contextual factors

Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 have discussed teachers' perceptions of their classroom actions, which showed a complex nature ranging from clear LA-supportive awareness to very vague knowledge of potential challenges hindering LA development. In addition, the complexity of Zia teachers' LA cognition was also reflected in their diverse thinking about various practical issues that they encountered in the classrooms. The issues concerned such aspects as differences between strong and weak students and between active and inactive students, dilemma in having limited time to handle both students' long-term learning abilities and the amount of teaching content required to be completed, and balance between releasing control and maintaining classroom order.

A common tone on the above issues was that they were mostly labelled as challenges or difficulties. Evidence was easily seen in several teachers' iteration of comments as such: good or strong students have some degree of autonomy and they can study by themselves as well as benefit from group work, but weak students have poor self-control and do not study or do not know what to do in teachers' absence; effective group work requires active participation of all group members, but there are always quiet or shy ones appearing inactive; time is always an issue, and it seems there is always endless content needing to taught; and freedom and discipline – or giving control and keeping order – are indeed a paradox. Apparently, such a tone sounds not very optimistic but familiar, as challenges and difficulties of similar kinds have been much reported in the existing LA literature and classified into three major categories in relation to students, teachers, and the institution (e.g., Barnard & Li, 2016b; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b)

Meanwhile, positive comments on constraints or challenges were also in evidence – although not abundant – among which Teacher 2's stood out as distinctive. According to her, all students have the potential to achieve a certain degree of

autonomy – including the very low-achievers and very quiet or shy types (not necessarily an indication of mental passivity) – as long as the teacher gives them the right tasks and provides the right support. Time is not a pressure, as once students have acquired "the ability to fish", they will not necessarily need "to fish in class time"; "freedom does not necessarily generate chaos", as "to control" and "to organise" are two different concepts and it is possible that students take control while being organised (T2.I).

A firm and optimistic view towards contextual factors – especially challenges and constraints – has been much advocated by active practitioners and researchers in the field of LA (e.g., Barfield et al., 2002; Barfield & Nix, 2003; Benson, 2007, 2010; Dam, 1995, 2011; Huang, 2006; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; McGrath, 2000; McGrath, 2012). However, such a view has been rarely reported in the studies into ordinary classroom teachers – those involved into little or no research in this area – except for a slight mention in Bullock (2011) in which a teacher maintained the practice of student self-assessment in spite of its time-consuming dimension. In this sense, it is particularly important to let teacher voices of this kind be heard, as it is the overwhelming number of classroom practitioners – rather than LA researchers or experts – who reach directly and affect widely the large number of students whose autonomy is the focus of attention.

## 5.6 Convergences and divergences between cognitions and practices

Sections 5.2 to 5.5 have discussed in detail the cognitions that Zia managers and teachers held about LA development and their respective practices in this respect. This section will summarise the key points and present a clear answer to the third research question: In what ways did the administrators' and the teachers' beliefs converge with or diverge from their practices?

To start with the two school managers, their LA-related beliefs and practices showed general convergences, however, in both positive and negative ways. The positive dimension lies in that the principal and the ED demonstrated understanding of the nature of control-shift in the development of autonomy, and they encouraged learner and teacher involvement in practice through the application of pedagogical guidelines; on the other hand, the negative dimension

was manifest in that teacher autonomy was constrained to some extent due to the managers' lack of awareness of the double-edged nature in some school-wide actions for training or supporting teachers and of the conflict between management autonomy and teachers' professional freedom.

With regard to the teachers, the convergences and divergences between their cognitions and practices appeared rather complex in an individualised and situated manner. The teachers' practices have been examined in terms of the degree of learner involvement (rough indication only, in accordance to aspects identified in Section 4.2), and their cognitions are viewed from three aspects (as discussed in Sections 5.2, 5.3, & 5.5) comprising their understanding of the concept, trust in learners' capacity for autonomy, and rationalisation of their practices. In accordance with the findings in Chapter Four and the previous discussion in this Chapter, Table 17 provides a general illustration as follows.

Table 17: Convergences & divergences between teachers' cognitions and practices

	T2	T8	T4	T5	T1	T9	T3	T7	T6
Practices	+ + + + -	+ + + - -	+ + + - -	+ + + - -	+ + + - -	+ + - - -	+ + - - -	+ + - - -	+ - - - -
Understanding of the concept	↑	↑	↑↓	↑	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓
Trust in learners' capacity for autonomy	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑	↑↓	↓
Rationalisation of practices	↑	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↑↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Ratio of positive to negative dimensions	9/1	6/3	6/4	5/4	6/5	4/5	4/5	4/6	2/7
LA orientation									

(Note: + and - indicate degree of LA orientation; ↑ **and** ↓ and indicate LA-enhancing or hindering dimensions)

As noted, both the practices and cognitions diverge from one teacher to another. Evidently, some teachers, in comparison with their colleagues, have demonstrated better understanding of the concept of LA, deeper trust in learners' capacity for

autonomy, more learner-involved practices, and sounder rationalisation for their own practices. Within each individual, positive convergences manifest in that both the teacher's thinking and doing (e.g., T2's) enhance LA development; while negative convergences show in that both the teacher's cognition and practice (e.g., T6) hinder LA progression. In the meantime, a wide range of divergences also exist at the intra-individual level, taking such forms as inconsistent practices (indicated by + and –) or contradictory cognitions (noted by ↑ and ↓). The situated nature of the convergences and divergences can be seen from such occasions as a teacher making very positive comments on his or her students' ability or performance at one time but rather negative remarks at another time. Furthermore, both convergences and divergences exist between cognition and practice, and across different aspects within cognition. The findings align with Borg's (2003) statement that teachers' cognitive world is a "complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive network of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs" (p. 81). The complexity illustrated in this section will be further discussed in Section 5.7 in terms of the CHAT framework.

5.7 Understanding the activity in the wider sociocultural context

Section 5.6 has dealt with the third research question in relation to the convergences and divergences between LA-related cognitions and practices at Zia. This section addresses the final research question: How should the convergences and divergences be explained in the wider sociocultural context?

Focusing on the activity of LA development at Zia, a clear thread running through the discussion in Sections 5.2 to 5.5 is the contextual and situated nature of the activity, whose conduct and outcomes are affected by various dynamic and interactive sociocultural factors. In this sense, the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Cole & Engeström, 1993) offers a suitable framework for the analysis of the key relationships within the activity in order to provide a grounded explanation for the overall findings of the present study.

According to CHAT, an activity is culturally specific and occurs at specific times, and elements within the activity change over time and changes in one component affect not only itself but others as well; however, subjects may not realise the changes that have occurred, and that leads to contradictions within the activity

system (Barnard, 2010). In accordance to Engeström's (1987) structure of human activity system (Figure 9), the development of LA at Zia shows a picture as in Figure 10.
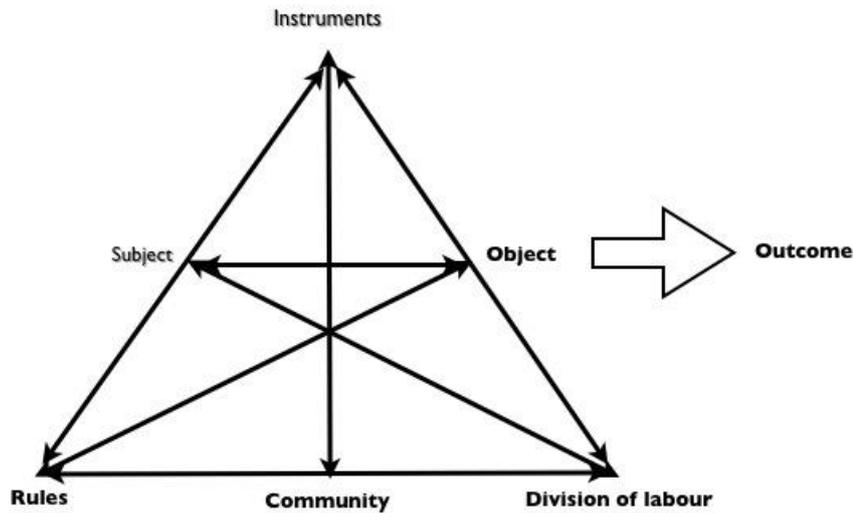

Figure 9: The structure of a human activity system
Source: Engeström (1987, p. 78). Reprinted with permission.
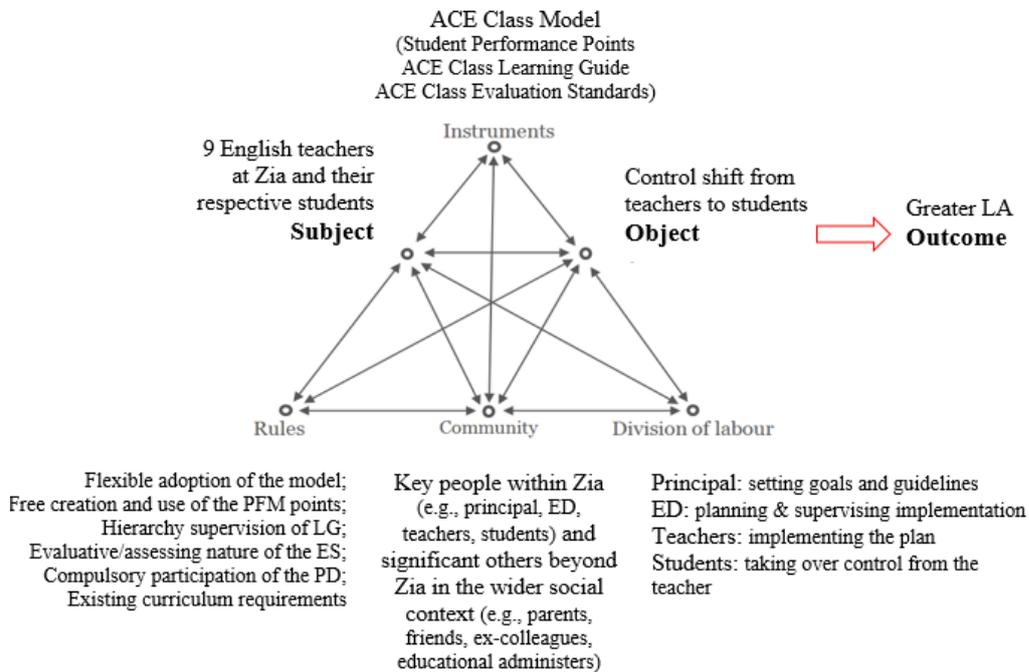
Figure 10: The activity of LA development at Zia
Source: Adapted from (Engeström, 1987, p. 78). Reprinted with permission.

As illustrated, a group of nine English teachers and their respective students (the subjects) were engaged in the activity of developing learner autonomy, aiming at

more student-controlled learning (immediate goal – the object) to generate learners with greater autonomy (long-term goal – the outcome). The activity was undertaken at Zia – a private secondary school incorporated in the Chinese educational system (the community) – which involved an array of individuals and groups within Zia (e.g., the principal, the ED, colleagues, students) and beyond (e.g., students' parents, educational administers of various levels, family and friends, and numerous others in various relationships with the teachers). In the conduct of the activity, the people who were concerned (both the core subjects and the ones in the wider community) held different positions and played different roles (division of labour), used a diversity of instruments (e.g., the ED's model), and applied varied rules (e.g., curricular requirements). All these elements change dynamically within themselves over time (the historical nature) and interact constantly with each other (the socio-cultural nature), resulting in varied outcomes in the process and at the end (or at least the end of a certain period, e.g., a semester or an academic year).

The CHAT framework illustrates various relationships, among which I will examine four key triangles – all in relation to the impact of one other element on the subjects' realisation of the object – the instruments, division of labour, rules, and community respectively.

5.7.1 Interactions between subjects, instruments and object
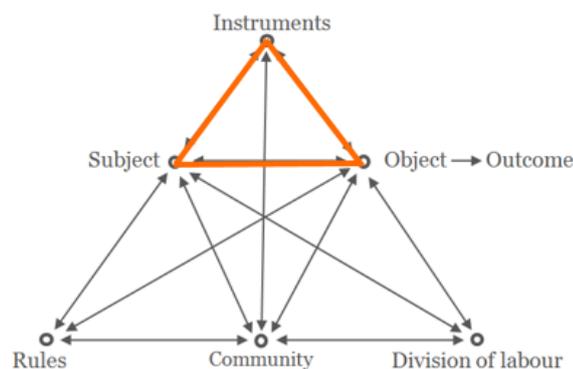

Figure 11: LA development in the context (Subject-Instrument-Object)
Source: Adapted from Engeström (1987, p. 78). Reprinted with permission.

The top triangle shows the interactions among the subject, instruments, and object. The most salient instrument applied in the activity was the ACE Class

Model (ACE for *autonomous, collaborative* and *efficient,* see Section 4.1.2.3) that the ED suggested for the teachers' classroom implementation of LA, which was accompanied by three further tools to facilitate its practical operation: student Performance Points, the ACE Class Learning Guide, and the ACE Class Evaluation Standards (see Section 4.1.2.4). These tools were designed to assist the teachers to transfer control to students, aiming at students' taking over the responsibility and exercising their agency for their own learning. Specifically, the model presented a series of learning activities which the teachers could use to involve students in taking more control; the Performance Points served as the incentives to motivate students to participate in these activities and the actual measuring tool for students to peer evaluate each other's performance in the activities; the Learning Guide – as its name suggests – provided the step-by-step guide for students to carry out the activities, and the Evaluation Standards provided a checklist for the teachers to self or peer monitor and evaluate the learner-centeredness of their lessons.

Findings showed that these tools facilitated the control shift in some aspects. For example, the model was adopted by all the teachers and resulted in abundant opportunities for students to study on their own or with group members, to present or peer-teach, and give each other comments or feedback. Students showed enthusiasm for opportunities to earn Points for their groups or to suggest Points for others' performance, and (in some classes) used the Points to peer-monitor progress of after-class learning (see *Peer progress checking* in Section 4.2.4); the Learning Guide was seen in use which presented both the classroom learning procedures and served as students' worksheets (see Pattern 2 in Section 4.2.2); and the Evaluation Standards were adopted as general guidelines for lesson planning and post-lesson reflection (T2.I).

Evidence also showed that some tools to some extent hindered learners' control. For instance, the Performance Points were taken by some teachers (T6, T9) as a powerful weapon to discipline students or peer-push each other, getting students (especially the weak ones) to (re)act under the pressure that they had to do so in order not to make their group lose Points because of them (see *Evaluation* in Section 4.3.3). In such cases, although students who were pushed might have done the job which their group members or teacher believed appropriate, their actions

were driven by others' will and control, which in effect could be harmful for their own autonomy. In another case, some groupwork activities (discussion, presentation, and peer comments) were seen running in formulaic routines which the ED had illustrated to the teachers as operational tips (see Pattern 7 in Section 4.2.2). In this sense, the model prescribed routines, and the teacher's (T3) adherence to the model inhibited to some degree the freedom or creativity in the ways of students' engagement with the intended learner-controlled activities. Furthermore, the teacher rationalised the routine groupwork as that students' activities should go in an orderly and appropriate manner. Such a justification reflected well one of the Evaluation Standards in relation to student comportment, for example, be quiet when thinking, warm/enthusiastic in discussion, and passionate when presenting. In this example, the constraining element of both the model and the Standards was apparent, in that such detailed prescription about activity organisation and student manners could be detrimental to a free supportive learning environment crucial for LA.

The teachers' use of these tools changed over time. Obvious evidence was seen from the various adaptations that the teachers made to the model; for example, the student-led peer teaching (Section 4.2.3) and the various other approaches that the teachers adopted for themselves or shared among a number of colleagues (Section 4.2.4). Changes of this kind took on a positive LA-leading feature, as they demonstrated the teachers' exercising their professional teacher autonomy – their willingness, capacity and freedom to take control of their own teaching (Huang, 2005), and acting as a mediator between the educational authorities and students (Benson, 2000) to create space for LA on the basis of the authority-given model (the ED in this case). It is worth noting that the extent to which the teachers mediated the existing conditions varied considerably due to another key element in the CHAT framework – division of labour. This will be further discussed in the following section (5.7.2).

In contrast to positive changes as illustrated above, some changes accompanying the application of the tools seemed to diverge from the object of the control transition from teacher to students. A big challenge that several teachers experienced was that after the "honeymoon" period with the so-called innovative model of classroom instruction, students' interest in external incentives (such as

the Performance Points) was fading away as they found "nothing indeed of novelty", and their motivation for participating the "seemingly-innovative" activities (such as discussion and presentation) shrank. Furthermore, the teachers themselves felt the excessive demands of making the Performance Points a truly effective and time-efficient instrument for fair evaluation. Due to these challenges, some teachers left out the peer-evaluation in class or simply gave the Points at will rather than negotiating with the students or leaving the decision exclusively with the students. Such changes arose in various forms, but neither did they occur on a regular or consistent basis, nor did there seem to have been a solution working for all. Perhaps what is important is a comprehensive and thorough rethinking and re-examination about these instruments to see if they are indeed effective, and (in case not) what can be done to make them so, or at least to mitigate the unfavourable dimensions in them – for example, by making some adjustments in relation to the rules for their application or operation (to be further discussed in Section 5.7.3).

In short, this section discusses the interactions between the subjects, the mediating tools, and the object. Apparently, the subjects' employment of the tools resulted in the achievement of the object to different degrees, and both positive and negative impacts existed. Also, the subjects adjusted the tools differently on the basis of the various immediate results (the object) arising in the process of the tool application. Next, I will look at the relationships in a different triangle, involving the subjects, division or labour, and object.

5.7.2 Interactions between subjects, division of labour and object
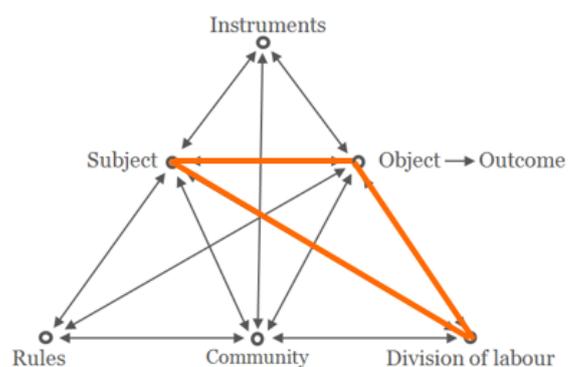

Figure 12: LA development in the context (Subject-Division of Labour-Object)
Source: Adapted from Engeström (1987, p. 78). Reprinted with permission.

Division of labour shows the distribution of responsibility in the conduct of the activity and how the work involved in the activity is divided among those who participate in the activity. Figure 13 illustrates division of labour as well as the power relationship at the secondary section of Zia on which this study focused.
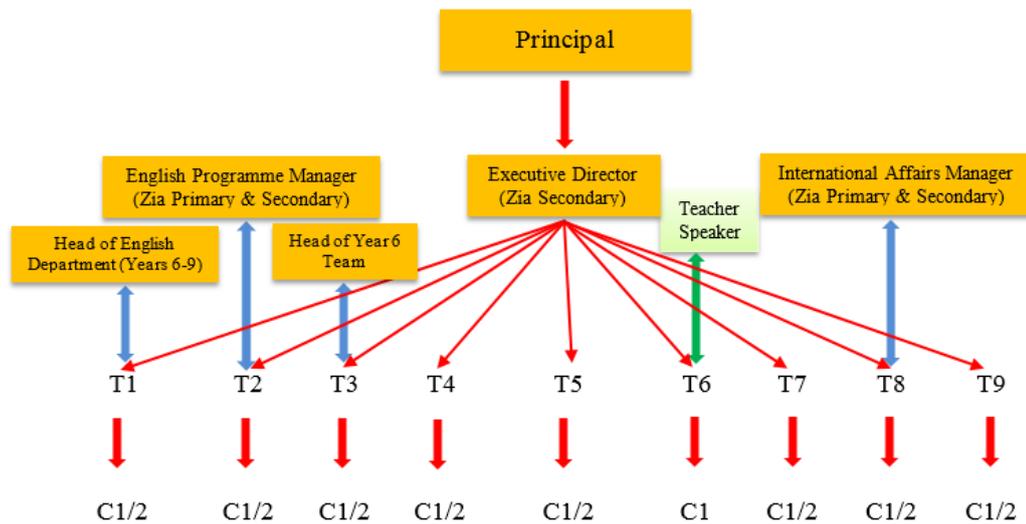

Figure 13: The division of labour at Zia

The structure of Zia appears a rather complex network, containing a hierarchy and several two-way vertical interactions. Illustrated in arrows of three colours, the relationships are categorised into three types: the academic hierarchy, double roles of some teachers in the school "formal order" and a hidden role of power in the "informal order" (Holliday, 1992).

The academic hierarchy is structured on four levels: the principal, the ED, nine English teachers and their respective students (two classes per teacher except for T6). The division of labour in the system – that is, their respective roles – is self-evident: the principal setting up goals and giving general guidelines for LA development, the ED making an operational plan for LA innovation and supervising its implementation, the teachers implementing the LA plan, and the students as the subjects whose autonomy was to be enhanced (the common goal of all at Zia). With LA as a shared school vision in this hierarchy, if the practices of every party involved had all been of a LA-supportive nature, and everyone had done "right" as described in their roles, the achievement of the goal would have been fairly straightforward and smooth. In that case – when everyone did as what

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the upper level wished – however, the final product of this hierarchy system would have had nothing to do with autonomy – in effect it would have gone towards a completely opposite direction. By contrast, the reality was that every party in the hierarchy, regardless of the level they were on, had a certain degree of autonomy (however small) of their own. Consequently, the labour division in the hierarchy system and the autonomy of each party or each individual gave rise to contradictions. As discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 5.3.1), a most protruding inconsistency lay in that, while both the principal and the ED aimed to support the teachers with the promotion of LA, the practical model that the ED provided was not entirely autonomy-encouraging. However, the empowered position that ED held as the general director for the LA innovative programme endowed the model with certain (or much) authoritative element. As a result, there arose practices of such kind which showed ostensible accordance with the "empowered" model but in effect just went through some "motions of devolving responsibility onto learners, yet without commitment or conviction" (Candy, 1991, p. 237). Obviously, such a result was not the intended outcome (object) of the activity.

Apart from the academic hierarchy, four teachers held a second role "in the formal order" (Holliday, 1992) of the school, which are illustrated in Figure 13 in blue arrows. These roles lifted the teachers up to management level at certain times or occasions (e.g., at management meetings), and as shown, Teachers 2 and 8 appeared more or less on the same level as the ED. Regardless of the specific responsibilities that these roles carried, the management position itself empowered those teachers to a certain extent, and this became a potential source of their professional freedom in the academic dimension. Teacher 2, as has been repeatedly shown as the exemplar, again provided solid evidence in this aspect: among all the teachers, the adaptions she made to the model were the most substantial; in other words, she adapted the model in the most creative way (evidence widespread throughout Sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.4). Another example can be seen from Teacher 8's firm belief in the communicative purpose of language learning (see *Presentation* in Section 4.3.3). The source of that belief, as he reported, derived much from his years of experience of dealing with various international affairs, for example, by recruiting native speaker teachers and

organising international camps, which were the major responsibility for his role as the international affairs manager. By these two examples, I am not suggesting that these other roles (than simply teaching) certainly bring along power or greater teacher autonomy, nor do they necessarily result in a greater degree of control release to student. Rather, I am saying that a management position could be a potentially significant source for power and thus exert considerable influence on the teaching practice of the teachers involved, especially in the Chinese context.

Besides a certain degree of power, an extra leadership position (on top of the same amount of teaching as other teachers, as for Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 8 in this study) carries with it a higher workload, which is unlikely to be a beneficial element in terms of the teachers' time and energy allocated for teaching. Teacher 3 offered an example in this regard. She was different from other teachers: having previously worked as an after-school tutor in a commercial tutoring institution, and being brand new to Zia in 2012, when the data collection was undertaken. On such a basis, the extra leadership that Teacher 3 held as the head of Year 6 team – neither major nor English subject-related – did not really empower Teacher 3 with more professional confidence in terms of the subject-matter content knowledge (Shulman, 1986, 1987), especially in comparison with her fellow colleagues. Rather, she labelled herself as a novice teacher who tried to familiarise herself with the new working environment and to learn as much as possible from others. She also expressed the challenges and struggle she was faced with in managing both her teaching role and being a team leader. These factors may provide an explanation – although not exclusively – for her close and uncritical adherence to the ED's model.

The extra roles that the above teachers took were all formally-assigned ones. In addition to this type, also notable was an implicit position of power which emerged informally from the everyday normal practice. Teacher 6 presented an example (illustrated in Figure 13 in a green arrow). Different from the formal roles as discussed above with Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 8, in the formal school system Teacher 6 was an ordinary teacher and, as has been shown, was different from the other teachers in that she taught only one class. However, that seemed to be something special for her, because that class, according to her account, was "a tough one which had frustrated several previous home teachers", and the principal

had appointed her to take over the class in consideration of her character and previous experiences. As indicated, the principal trusted her, and her character – "tough", as she herself described – was an advantage in teaching the "tough" class. Also, she had previously worked in a university and then an accredited IELTS training institution, a kind of experience at higher-levels institutions which few of the other teachers had. In addition, she spoke fluent English, and she appeared a confident and eloquent speaker whenever talking to others in either language (Chinese or English), evidence of which was seen in the department open discussions and the interview and post-lesson discussions with me. Her style of speaking was further recognised as a strength and gave her voice an authoritative tone when she spoke frequently as the group representative during the pre-school LA-focused teacher training sessions. Such verbal behaviour accumulated and portrayed a much-empowered (and somewhat over-confident) image of Teacher 6. Nevertheless, despite the power and confidence expressed mostly in her voice, there arose a sign of relatively less reflective thinking, which seemed to be a possible explanation for her repeated self-contradictory remarks in relation to students' autonomous ability and her stated practice of releasing control to students (see *Peer feedback & Peer teaching* in Section 4.3.3). Teacher 6's example in this case suggests that apart from the formal school order, teachers may also be empowered informally by various other means, and the power that accompanied could as well significantly impact on their teaching practice, although the impact may not necessarily lead positively to the control shift from teacher to students (and of course, might not necessarily be negative either).

To summarise this section, regarding the labour division and power allocation at Zia, three types of power relationships were identified from this study, and they all showed significant impact (both positive and negative) on the teachers' practices towards the achievement of the effective control shift and then greater learner autonomy.

Next, I will move to look at another triangle concerning subjects, rules, and object.

### 5.7.3 Interactions between subjects, rules and object
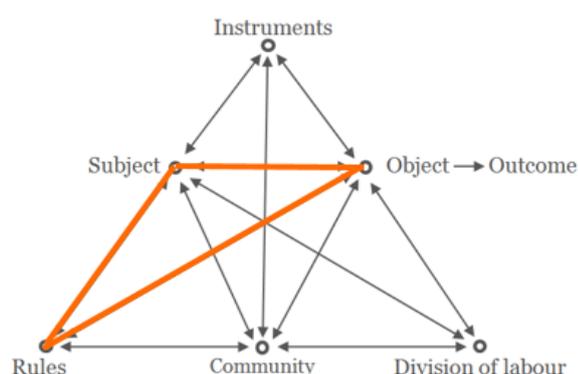
Figure 14: LA development in the context (Subject-Rules-Object)
Source: Adapted from Engeström (1987, p. 78). Reprinted with permission.

Rules are what the subjects are supposed to adhere to while engaging in the activity. Key rules which showed significant impact on the teachers' engagement with LA development in this study involved regulations regarding the use of the various tools (mainly the ACE Class Model, the Performance Points, the Learning Guide, and the Evaluation standards, see Section 5.7.1), requirements for the LA-focused professional development (PD) activities, and the existing curriculum requirements.

Key rules regarding the mediating instruments are summarised as follows: the ACE Class Model was a suggested procedure, about which the teachers could make necessary changes flexibly; the Performance Points were for awarding as well as punishing students' performance in both academic learning and disciplinary behaviours, the rules for which should be made ideally by students themselves; the Learning Guide should be the co-product of group lesson planning, and be reviewed and approved (by signature) by the head of department and the ED before being put into practice; and Evaluation Standards were the tool for peer observation and evaluation of open lessons, through which each open lesson should be scored and then graded and ranked, and the results of which affect directly the teachers' bonus income (see more details in Section 4.1.2.4).

Among the above rules, some are apparently LA-supportive, for example, allowing free adaptation to the suggested model, using the Performance Points to motivate students, and encouraging students to make their own rules. By contrast,

some others expose LA-inhibiting nature, for instance, the punishing purpose of the Performance Points. As to the Learning Guide and the Evaluation Standards, as have mentioned earlier in Sections 5.3 and 5.4.1, while both to some extent encouraged collaborative learning among the fellow teachers, they also revealed such issues as the ED's lack of trust in teachers' ability, the challenge of practical operation, and the risk of causing peer pressure. Especially with regard to the Evaluation Standards, while most teachers said that they did not care about the evaluation very much, and the resultant difference in the bonus income was not big, it was noted that the scores and grades in effect exerted more negative than positive impact on the teachers. Evidence was seen in such episodes: one teacher was very frustrated by the low score she got for a lesson into which she had put much effort, and another teacher could not hold back her sarcastic comments after having seen an unusually low score for her lesson. Concerning this issue, the Programme Manager (Teacher 2) pointed out that given the direct connection of the evaluative results to the teachers' financial profits as well as their "face" (reputation caused by the professional judgement), such evaluation seemed to create more competition than collaboration between the teachers and was therefore more detrimental than constructive.

Another notable rule related to the compulsory attendance at the various professional development activities, including the peer observation and evaluation and the pre-school LA-focused teacher training workshops. While these activities assisted the teachers in some aspects to some degree, it should be noted that participating in all these demanded time – not a small amount in effect – something which teachers seemed to be always short of. Regarding this issue, it may be worth reconsidering the compulsory nature in attending these activities, especially in reference to that of autonomy. If developing LA requires teachers to give choices to students, by analogy, should not options also be allowed in the teachers' professional learning? Moreover, as the ED was aware of the importance of reflection in learning and made it a key step in the autonomous and collaborative learning model, it may be wondered whether such intensive professional training on top of the teachers' routine teaching would leave much time or energy for the teachers to reflect properly on their practical teaching as well as the professional learning.

The last rule to be discussed in this section concerns the existing curriculum requirements, among which was one that exerted noticeable impact on the teachers' LA implementation. This was the amount of work that must be completed within the given amount of time; for example, a book to be covered within a semester. This pressure explains several episodes in which the teacher concluded a lesson in haste or even left out activities that were potentially LA-conducive. There was considerable evidence in this respect; for example, Teacher 8 cut off the group discussion at the time when students were just warmed up into a mood of talking (T8.L2.O); and Teacher 1 expressed a dilemma that she often encountered: that without sufficient time, peer feedback or evaluation would end up superficially in haste – yet she was often reluctant to allow more time in consideration of the planned content to be finished. "It seems there is always endless stuff to teach, and everyone seems to be always rushing to move forward" (T1.I), as she said.

To wrap up this section, various rules were applied in the promotion of LA at Zia regarding the use of mediating instruments, professional development activities, and curriculum requirements. While some rules showed a clear LA-encouraging nature, some others seemed to be constraining, and some contained both opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, contradictions were detected within the rules, for example, the freedom allowed in the adoption of the model and the rigidity of the Evaluation Standards.

Next, I will move on to discuss the last triangle – the relationships among subjects, community, and object.

### 5.7.4 Interactions between subjects, community and object
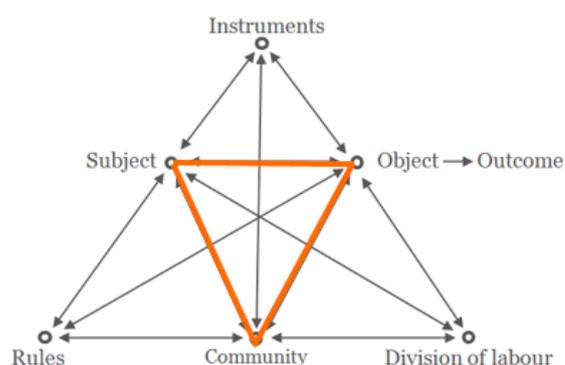
Figure 15: LA development in the context (Subject-Community-Object)
Source: Adapted from Engeström (1987, p. 78). Reprinted with permission.

Community is the environment in which the activity is carried out, embracing the people and group whose knowledge, interests, stakes and goals shape the activity. Stakeholders in the community in this study included the principal, the ED, teachers (including those teaching English and other subjects), students as well as their parents, education administers and policy makers at all levels of the education system, and various significant others in some personal relationship with the nine teachers regarding the development of LA.

Towards the achievement of the object and the outcome, a significant mediator in the community is the shared goal. Regarding this, it is noted that while developing LA was a key vision explicitly expressed by the authorities in the community (including the Chinese Ministry of Education, the principal, and the ED), also highly stressed were students' high academic grades, or good examination scores. However, there seemed to a competition or contradiction between the two in terms of priority. A close examination of the varied opinions held by the different stakeholders in the community provided evidence in this respect.

Specifically, while the principal claimed Zia's school vision as "[f]or both good grades and holistic development"; the ED asserted three objectives of the school LA innovation as "autonomy, collaboration, and efficiency", and efficiency as the core, he emphasised the priority of the effectiveness of learning reflected by good exam scores. Such emphasis on examination scores in Chinese schools is common and understandable, due to the high stakes they play in both students' entire

schooling life and their future career development. Consequently, no matter what innovation is to be promoted, examination scores seem always a major concern of many, such as managers, teachers, students and parents. As Teacher 2 said, "although people talk much about developing students' ability of this or that kind, what most people care most or watch most closely is still exam scores." However, "there is a conflict", she continued, "developing such abilities as autonomy is a long-term matter, the effect of which does not show distinctively in a short term, while the conventional way of duck-stuffing may bring about immediate increase in exam scores" (T2.I).

Such an environment had a strong impact on many decisions that the teachers made in their everyday classroom teaching. For example, Teacher 8 made an adjustment to a groupwork activity from the original free story-making to one based on an outline provided in Chinese, and reason for the change was that the latter resembled an outline-based writing task in many examinations (see *Group work* in Section 4.3.3). While both activities were student-centred and conducive to autonomy, it was clear that the space for free thinking and expression contained in a more-structured task was less than that in a more open-ended one. By this example, I am neither saying that it is wrong to accommodate students' examination needs: after all, making personal relevance to one's learning is advisable and important for LA enhancement (Benson, 2016); nor that the outline that the teacher provided was not beneficial: the observation showed that the given outline provided good support to students and facilitated the discussion. Rather, my point is that when opportunities for autonomy encounter more urgent demands for improvement of examination scores, very often most teachers choose to sacrifice the former for the latter; and often the highly examination-oriented learning hinders LA development.

In a sense, both the principal's two-point school vision (for both good grades and holistic development) and the ED's three-key-word LA innovation objectives (autonomy, collaboration and efficiency) were indeed already a sign of compromise to the practical and realistic needs of various stakeholders; otherwise they would not have distinguished the commitment to good grades from a holistic development of students. Did a holistic development not include good academic grades? Apparently, they did so – or had to do so – because as a private school

which financially depended largely on their investors (students' parents in this case), they must have – or cannot afford not to – the trust and satisfaction of these significant stakeholders.

To answer the last research question and conclude this section, the school convergences and divergences of the managers and the teachers in relation to LA development can be interpreted through the CHAT framework in terms of four key aspects: adoption of mediating instruments, division of labour, application of rules, and the influence of various members of the community. The discussion reveals that the wider sociocultural context has a significant impact on the learners' autonomy through the shift of control from teacher to student, in both positive and negative ways. The discussion also exposes various contradictions within and across the constituents of the CHAT system. These contradictions need to be identified and managed, as otherwise they lead to confusion or frustration of the subjects, ineffectiveness in their operations and actions, and/or inefficiency in the transformation of the object to achieve the desired outcome (Barnard, 2010). By contrast, if changes are managed properly, they lead to "expansive learning" – "the processes in which an activity system resolves its pressing internal contradictions by constructing and implementing a qualitatively new way of functioning for itself" (Engeström, 2007, p. 24).

5.8 Summary of the discussion

In summary, this chapter has discussed the findings of the study from four aspects: knowledge about the *what*, *why*, and *how* regarding LA development, beliefs in learners' capacity for autonomy, LA-oriented practices, and reflections on the practices. On the basis of the discussion, a clear picture takes shape regarding the cognition and practices of the school managers and teachers at Zia. CHAT provides a useful framework for understanding the way that the promotion of LA in the context changes over time, as well as explaining contradictions that give rise to the convergences and divergences within and between the agents of the activity.

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CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the thesis, and is organised in four sections. Section 6.1 summarises the main points of the project, involving the purpose of the study, setting and participants, data collection and analysis, and key findings and discussions. Section 6.2 acknowledges the limitations of the study. Section 6.3 draws implications for classroom implementation, research, and theory in relation to teachers' beliefs and practices about developing learner autonomy. Section 6.4 suggests areas for further research. Section 6.5 is my final reflection.

6.1 Summary of key points

This case study investigated Chinese school teachers' practice and cognition about developing learner autonomy (LA), with the particular focus on the control shift from teacher to student in conventional EFL classrooms. The motivation for the research derived from my personal pursuit over years as an EFL teacher for a more liberal and enjoyable way of teaching and learning, and the fact that LA is repeatedly mandated as a key curricular goal in the recent Chinese education reforms (China MoE, 2001a, 2011). A review of relevant literature suggests that while teachers' understanding of a pedagogical notion plays a crucial role in its classroom implementation (Wedell, 2009), teachers' perceptions have not been awarded much attention in the field of LA research (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b). Furthermore in this area, few empirical studies have been conducted in the context of conventional Chinese secondary EFL classrooms, exploring teachers' cognition about the nature of LA as well as the practice of fostering LA through a control shift from teacher to student.

The study was conducted in a newly-established (in 2009) private secondary school. The school was selected because some of its features were believed to be LA-conducive, including its principal's recognition of LA as a key school vision and its private nature bearing more institutional freedom than public schools. Such features made the school "an extreme and unique case" and served as a "test bed" (Robson, 2002, p. 182) for research, with the implication that if LA

implementation could not be effective in this case, it is less likely to work elsewhere, where circumstances were less conducive. The participants comprised the school managers (the principal and the executive director) and all the nine teachers in the English department, constituting an institutional case in which the implementation of the new curriculum can be traced from the policy makers, facilitators to the practitioners.

I adopted a qualitative approach to data collection under the interpretive naturalistic paradigm, aiming at an understanding of the investigated case in more "depth" rather than "breadth" (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2010, p. 65). The instruments employed for data collection consisted of interviews, observations, post-lesson discussions, documentary analysis, and research field notes and reflective journal. Data analysis was guided by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and facilitated by NVivo 10, the process of which went through open and axial coding (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987), constant comparisons and contrasts (Harding, 2013; Strauss, 1987), and iterative checking (Seidel, 1998).

In reference to the research questions specified in Chapter Two, key findings are summarised as follows. Firstly, regarding the beliefs about LA, the school managers highly appreciated the value of LA and made it an explicitly key school vision. The principal interpreted the notion in terms of three fundamental changes that students should make in relation to their own learning, concerning motivation for learning, focus of learning, and mental and behavioural control during the learning process. The executive director highlighted the importance of learners' agency for their own learning, and the way of knowledge construction through individual inquiry and collaborative learning. The teachers' understanding of LA showed general accordance with the key points expressed by the school managers, which together reflected to some extent the four dimensions of LA – psychological, technical, political, and social, as proposed by Benson (1997) and Oxford (2003).

Despite a measure of agreement in the interpretation of the concept of LA at Zia, the data did not show a clearly-defined construct of LA which was commonly shared by all teachers and the school managers. Furthermore, some robust LA statements which are widely cited in LA literature (e.g., LA means learners taking

responsibility) were not explicitly expressed at Zia. Given the informative and guiding role that teacher cognition plays in their practice (Borg, 2006), such lack of shared understanding of the key idea being promoted implies that the classroom implementation of LA at Zia might go in diverse ways, some perhaps not genuinely leading to LA.

Secondly, besides understanding the notion of LA, a salient aspect in teachers' cognition is their trust in learners' capacity for autonomy, which by extension also included the managers' beliefs in the teachers' autonomous ability as well as that of the learners. The findings in this respect revealed a continuum of varied opinions with full trust at one end and almost zero trust at the other. Furthermore, some teachers' beliefs in this regard appeared changeable over time and self-contradictory before and after reflecting on students' performances in individual or collaborative inquiry. The changes also varied in nature, with some demonstrating a gradually increasing trust in students while others revealing a lack of genuine trust in students' potential for autonomous learning.

Thirdly, with respect to the LA-oriented practices at Zia, the school innovation project led by the executive director demonstrated a double-edged nature – both facilitating and constraining autonomy – and the teachers displayed considerably different degrees of control release to students. Specifically, some evidence of control shift was seen in most of the observed lessons, but such shift varied from lesson to lesson and from teacher to teacher, forming again a spectrum of control release (Candy, 1991), with abundant genuine opportunities for student control displayed (in one lesson taught by one teacher) at one extreme, while control shift ended up as mere lip service (in another lesson taught by another teacher) at the other. When at times control was handed over to students, they were involved in such activities as giving presentations, studying by themselves, doing pair or group work, and peer teaching. Throughout the involvement of these activities, both strengths and weaknesses of the teachers' practices were exposed in terms of their LA-oriented nature.

Fourthly, reflecting on the LA-featured practices, the teachers demonstrated different measures of awareness of the control-shifting elements and their impact on LA development. Awareness ranged from fully conscious to almost

unconscious, and contradictory opinions were detected within individual teachers' practices and stated beliefs. Divergences were also reflected in the teachers' thinking about the various mediating tools that they adopted in their lessons (e.g., PowerPoint Slides and students' worksheets). While some teachers demonstrated sound justification for the appropriateness of the support provided, some showed lack of rationales for having (or not) utilised a certain tool.

Lastly, comparing the teachers' practices and perceptions about LA resulted in convergences and divergences between the two in diverse ways. Viewing the teachers' practices and beliefs through the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Cole & Engeström, 1993) offers some explanations for the convergences and divergences. A recurrent theme that took shape from the comparisons was that the teachers who demonstrated a sound understanding of the nature of LA and genuine control release to students held a generally positive attitude towards both students' ability and various contextual factors; while those who lacked a grasp of the nature of LA and demonstrated little or pseudo-control shift to students also revealed lack of genuine trust in students' ability and viewed a number of contextual factors as challenging and constraining. An overview of the findings of this study displayed the complex, dynamic, and contextualised nature of teachers' cognition and practice (Borg, 2003, 2006; Feryok, 2010; Zheng, 2013a, 2013b, 2015).

On the basis of the key findings as summarised above, this thesis argues that, in order to fulfil the goal of developing autonomy through control shift, three attributes are essential for school managers and teachers: mutual understanding of the nature of LA, trusting learners' capacity for autonomy, and being aware of the autonomy-enhancing or hindering factors in their practices. Towards the various contextual factors, a firmly positive attitude is crucial, that is, developing LA within constraints (Benson, 2007; Huang, 2006). The rationale is that with a positive perspective, people see seek opportunities for action towards achievement of the aim; with a negative one, however, they are more likely to see the challenging side and make excuses for lack of action, in which case there would be little chance of achieving the goal of LA.

6.2 Limitations

Although I have endeavoured to conduct the study systematically to seek a comprehensive and in-depth understanding regarding the chosen topic, it should be acknowledged that limitations inevitably exist.

First of all, in terms of the research style, the study was defined as a case study which by nature is restricted to "a bounded system" (Creswell, 1994) – a newly-established Chinese private secondary school in this case. Consequently, while the inquiry has to some extent achieved its "uniqueness, particularity and diversity" (Stake, 1995, p. 238), it is not possible to generalise the findings of this study or transfer them widely to other settings, although many teachers may find them informative or illuminating. Rather, only readers in schools which resemble Zia in some respects may find the results of this study (or some of them) applicable in their contexts.

Further limitations were observed regarding the data collection procedures. As has been reported in Sections 3.3.2, I altered/changed the designed data collection plan to some extent due to unexpected changes encountered in the field. The changes appeared to be double-edged – while rare (and unique) opportunities were created for investigation into an authentic school innovation plan, the intensive and tight school for the open lesson observations and evaluations significantly restricted my own control over the research plan. As a result, I was not able to observe a series of consecutive lessons of one teacher across a complete teaching unit, nor could I have followed each lesson with the post-lesson discussion as planned. Specifically, the individual post-lesson discussions – which were designed as the major instrument to elicit teachers' in-action thinking and intended to be deployed as soon as possible after the observed lessons– were postponed till after the school-scheduled open lesson discussions. Furthermore, due to practical reasons, the intervals between the observations and post-lesson discussions turned out to be three or four days long (sometimes with weekends in between). These practical adjustments impacted on the data in two major ways: on the one hand, although mediating tools (such as PowerPoint slides or observation notes) were adopted to stimulate the teacher's recall of their thinking during the lessons, the prolonged intervals almost certainly diluted some of the teachers'

memory; on the other hand, as has been mentioned in Section 3.5.1, the teachers' thinking revealed in the private discussion with me was to a greater or lesser degree (but evidently) affected by the opinions of their departmental colleagues shared at the earlier open discussions. Moreover, respecting the interviews, due to scheduling restrictions, some took place at a time very close to or concurrently with a post-lesson discussion. These occurrences blurred to some extent the data sources, and maybe further blurred the borderline between teachers' general beliefs about LA and their comments on some specific events or episodes.

Another limitation relates to some features that I myself carry as the researcher. For the teacher participants at Zia on the one hand, while acting as an outsider investigator, I am also an insider EFL professional with a higher qualification, which may have labelled me as a relative authority in the shared professional field. In addition, the teachers were aware of the previous acquaintance that I had with the principal and the head of the department (T1); to some extent, this carried the risk that some teachers might have reserved certain opinions or have expressed them somehow alternatively. Regarding these personal factors, in spite of my efforts, I am aware it is not possible to shake them off completely. A further limitation concerned the analysis of data: as a novice researcher, although I have endeavoured to have taken advice from supervisors and relevant literature following a systematic procedure, subjectivity was inevitable in terms of both the selection and interpretation of the data.

Although not a limitation, it is acknowledged that the focus of this study was primarily on teacher cognition and practice; the picture would have been more complete if the perceptions and practices of the students had been obtained. It is suggested – later in Section 6.4 – that this is an area that would usefully form the focus of further research.

6.3 Implications

In spite of the various limitations acknowledged above, this study has a number of important practical and theoretical implications for LA implementation and research. Next, I will discuss these implications in more detail from five aspects: classroom implementation, teacher development, policy making, theory, and research.

6.3.1 Implications for classroom implementation

Regarding Zia teachers' classroom implementation of LA, the discussion in Chapter Five suggests that learner control was more involved in some dimensions (e.g., individual or collaborative inquiry) than some others (e.g., learner goal-setting or planning) and that learner reflection and target language use appeared areas needing teachers' more attention. It also shows that the potentially LA-oriented practices of different teachers diverged considerably in effect due to their understanding of the notion of LA, trust in learners' ability, and awareness of the LA-enhancing or hindering features in their practices. The discussion makes important implications for future classroom practice: firstly, the approach of LA construction through control shift is feasible; secondly, there is still large space to be explored for further control release; thirdly and importantly, for truly effective practice of LA promotion, attention must be paid to teachers' cognitive understanding of the notion of LA throughout the teaching process – that is, before, during, and after their pedagogical actions; lastly but not least, attention should also be paid to students' mental preparedness for taking control, as well as their thinking along with, and after, their control-taking activities.

In this sense, it may be useful to take a reflective perspective to view both LA-oriented teachers' cognitions and practices and those of learners, that is, a reflective approach to autonomy-oriented learning and teaching. On such a basis, the following framework (Figure 16) is proposed as a tentative guideline for practical operation, which refers to and integrates Borg's (2003) view of teacher cognition as "what teachers know, believe and think" (p. 81), Farrell's (2007) advocate for teacher reflection in, on, and for action, and LA operational techniques and strategies widely-suggested by leading LA researchers (Benson, 1997, 2003; Little, 2006; Nunan, 2003) as outlined in Figure 3 in Section 2.1.3.
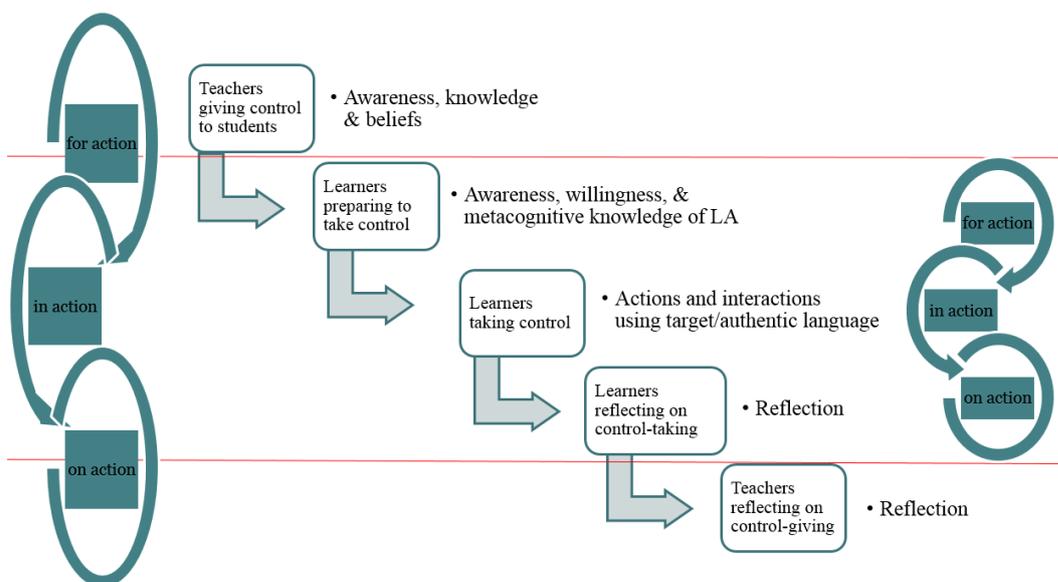
Figure 16: LA-oriented reflective teaching and learning

As shown, the framework entails a reflective teaching cycle of teachers and a reflective learning cycle of learners, both of which highlight on-going cognitive activities throughout the teaching or learning process. The logic behind each cycle is that before undertaking any activity, one needs a body of knowledge about what that is, why to do that, and how to achieve a desirable outcome, so as to get mentally prepared for the subsequent action or actions.

Focusing on the learner part, Huang and Benson (2013) break the "capacity" of learner control down to three components – "*ability*, *desire* and *freedom*" – indicating learners having the potential to control, being willing or wanting to control, and being allowed the freedom to control (p. 9, italics in original). In actuality, the freedom part is not within – at least not entirely – learners' control; rather, it depends largely on the space that their teachers allow for them to control. Furthermore, for students who have never encountered the concept of LA, then it should also be part of teacher role to raise their initial awareness as Nunan (1997) proposed. Then, students need to be prepared with the metacognitive knowledge – the actual know-how part – for actions, from needs analysis, goal setting and planning to implementing the plan and monitoring process and assessing outcomes subsequently (Holec, 1981; Reinders, 2010). Moreover, Farrell (personal communication, 17 July, 2016) adds the element of learners' acceptance of control-taking so as to bridge up the cognitive and the behavioural sections.

Only when learners are cognitively prepared as such, will their subsequent actions and interactions become meaningful and purposeful, leading towards more autonomy. Otherwise, if they only act or interact in the way instructed or directed by the teacher – for example, heads huddling together like puppets for a discussion when hearing the teacher say "discuss" (T3.L2.O) – the potential for autonomy in the actions or interactions is, though not nil, largely underexploited. Thinking along with doing – reflection in actions, in Farrell's (2007) term – should be encouraged, for example, through quick notes or peer-reminding in class.

More importantly, proper reflections on actions should be encouraged, arranged, and acknowledged. For effective enforcement of such reflections, appropriate time should be allocated, in terms of both length and regularity; for example, five minutes at the close of an activity, or twenty minutes before closing up a day. Also, reflective outcomes should be encouraged as well as recorded, either individually or collectively with learning peers or groups, by certain means such as journals or log books. Furthermore, the content of reflections should incorporate both the content of learning (which alone would be just a lesson review) and also the way of learning, whether it is orienting towards more control and responsibilities by the learners. Again, awareness is needed that students with no prior knowledge or experience of such kind of reflection would not pick up the idea and do it with ease, thus need to be guided and supported.

Now, to focus to the teacher cycle, it is apparent that to make such LA-oriented reflective learning happen, teachers themselves need to be prepared, with the cognitive knowledge that students have and beyond. Given the significant impact of teachers' cognitions on their pedagogical practices and the mis- or partial understanding about LA disclosed in this study, it may be worthwhile for teachers to start with a self-scrutiny of their own cognitive system to see if its components consist with, or go against, the nature of LA. In this sense, it could be helpful to have a comprehensive checklist of questions concerning teachers' knowledge and beliefs in relation to the *what*, *why*, and *how* about LA development and a reflective way of learning, as well as their awareness and attitudes towards various contextual factors – both opportunities and challenges. The following are a few examples of such self-checking questions:

- Do I know LA means learners taking control of their own learning?
- Do I know that means I must provide opportunities for them to do so?
- Am I truly willing to share control with students?
- Do I really trust my students can take some control of their learning?
- How much can I tolerate students' errors or mistakes?
- When students' performance is unsatisfactory, in what way can I guide and support them to improve by themselves or with each other?
- When some students do not respond actively, in what way can I motivate them?
- With quiet and reserved students, in what way can I respect their individuality and offer alternative choices?
- What if students do not want to, or are not able to, take responsibility, what support do they need?
- What opportunities and challenges are there in my working environment? And how can I create more opportunities out of the existing conditions?

By asking questions as above (of course, not limited to these), it is hoped that teachers establish a clear and explicit understanding of the control-shifting nature in the construction of LA, a firm belief in its value for students and in students' capacity to take control, as well as a realistically positive attitude towards various contextual factors. With such contextualised attitudes, teachers would be more likely to live with the conditions, carefully examine them, and explore as many opportunities and possibilities as possible for students to exercise their agency.

Cognitively prepared as above, teachers then move on to their LA-oriented professional actions, which, as illustrated in Figure 16, should incorporate the whole students' learning cycle from preparing them, involving them, to guiding and facilitating their reflection. During the process, teachers should provide students with appropriate support. The discussion of the findings in this respect (Section 5.4.2) exposes weaknesses in some Zia teachers' practice, such as insufficient or excessive support. Concerning this issue, Van Lier's (1996) six principles of scaffolding provides a useful guide to facilitate teachers' support for students, comprising *contextual support, continuity, intersubjectivity, contingency, flow, and handover* (p. 195). According to these principles, teachers should provide a safe but challenging environment, prepared to accept and handle learner errors; and repeat occurrences of a complex of actions over time, embracing both routine and variations. During the conduct of the activity, teachers and students

are mutually engaged, two minds thinking as one; and teachers have contingent plans ready to assist learners in accordance to their reactions. When learners' actions can flow in a natural way, teachers hand over the task completely to students, and move on to start over a new task.

Another salient aspect in teachers' actions relates to the target language use in the student-involved activities, which appeared fairly limited in many of the teachers' practices. This deserves attention in either consideration of the communicative function of language or that of free thinking and expression inherent in the nature of autonomy. Given the language use situation in the Chinese school context and the average language proficiency of teachers and students in the context, it is perhaps advisable to promote a judicious blend of first and target languages: the former to enable students to think and discuss cognitive and meta-cognitive matters easily and insightfully, and the latter to promote communicative competence in English. In this regard, Teacher 2 has demonstrated its feasibility in her practice of eliciting real-life conversations through some social chats (T2.L2.O); yet further exploration should be encouraged for ways of expanding opportunities of students using English in other ways than mainly textbook-based practice.

Now, referring back to the reflective teaching cycle as in Figure 16, teachers need to keep thinking along with, and after, their LA-intended professional actions, so as to keep checking if their actions are on the track of supporting autonomy, rather than discouraging it. Regarding this, the well-established domain of research on reflective teaching has offered insightful theoretical and practical guide (Farrell, 2007, 2014; Richards & Farrell, 2005, 2011), for example, the ESL teacher development group in Farrell (2014). Also in this respect, the self-checking questions mentioned earlier may still serve as a useful tool, and the collective open discussion that was part of the teacher support programme at Zia (see Section 4.1.2.4) is another opportunity for teacher reflection. No matter in what ways or with whom reflections are conducted, the important matter is that teachers truly appreciate the value of such reflective practice, take it seriously, and use it a powerful tool for teaching improvement.

6.3.2 Implications for teacher professional development

While the above section has suggested various teacher responsibilities in the implementation of LA, it is apparent that the teachers, like their students, are also learners, in that they themselves were neither born with a body of knowledge and beliefs regarding LA development, nor have they received formal education in this respect (no evidence from the findings showed recognition of LA in their pre-service teacher education). Consequently, some similar implications arise in this section for teachers' professional development, among which I want to reinforce three salient ones: a shared comprehensive understanding of the key idea of the innovation; convergence between LA policies and actions taken to facilitate its fulfilment; and a supportive and collegial working environment encouraging genuine professional freedom.

Firstly, regarding the key idea being promoted, a shared understanding requires the consonance within the management and between the management and teachers. As is common in most Chinese educational institutions, management involves many people at various levels in a hierarchy, and teachers are at a relatively low position (only above students) under the leadership of all the managerial staff (*ling dao*, in Chinese culture). Under such circumstances, it is highly important that all the managers lead towards the same direction. Otherwise, divergent leadership misleads or causes confusion – an obvious example in this study is the contradiction between the promotion of the ED's model and the principal's beliefs that LA development does not need any model. What is equally important is that the shared understanding permeates the institution to every individual teacher involved. A suggestion for approaches to such shared understanding is through focused group discussion between managers and teachers with opportunities for questions and clarifications, or professional development workshops such as conducted by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a, 2012b) and in the studies of Barnard and Li (2016b).

The second point stresses the importance of convergence between policies and actions. This requires constant reflection on the part of the managers, and their careful examination of the nature regarding any actions they take claiming to support teachers. In this study, some of the school-wide innovative actions which

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were supposed to be facilitating teachers' collaborative learning (e.g., the teacher peer observation and evaluation) in effect may have caused tension and frustration among colleagues.

As to the third point concerning space for freedom and a collegial environment, it is a common sense that while the various professional development activities (like the group lesson planning and peer observation and feedback giving in this study) may be helpful for some teachers in some ways, certainly not everything is useful for everybody. Taking into consideration the autonomous nature of the key concept, it is reasonable to believe that more freedom in the selection of and voluntary participation in these activities would be more beneficial for teachers' professional development, in both accommodating their individual working schedule and building up a caring and supportive working environment.

6.3.3 Implications for policy making

In terms of policy making, the study implies the necessity of incorporating LA development as an integral part of the assessment system at various levels. The implication is made due to the contradiction exposed from the findings between the extra highlight on LA as a key goal in the new curriculum and the acknowledgement of subject knowledge as learning outcomes in the conventional practice of assessment.

The traditional Chinese way of teaching and learning has often been described as teachers transmitting knowledge to students followed by students being assessed in terms of the quantity and quality of their intake. Although the way has been much criticised and claimed to be changing, its logic is clear and reasonable, in that the knowledge being delivered and assessed is one type of knowledge – the subject content knowledge. In addition, while the assessment serves as the instrument for testing learning effect, to some extent it also provides the motivation and/or purpose for learning and exerts strong washback effect on learning.

In the new curriculum, when LA is introduced as the favourable way of learning to exercise learners' agency, this is a new (at least unfamiliar) ability, or in effect a new type of knowledge – knowledge about how to learn. Gaining knowledge of

this type takes time and efforts of both teachers and students to orient themselves this way. Following the logic in the traditional education that new knowledge is taught, learnt and then assessed, if LA is encouraged and to a greater or lesser extent, it should be appropriately recognised. Therefore, perhaps the most direct and effective way is to make the products and processes of autonomous learning ability an integral part of the assessment system. As to specific forms in which LA can be demonstrated and evaluated, various examples have been seen in the large body of LA literature, such as portfolios, reading logs, or learning diaries. While these approaches have been widely used in both Western and Asian environments (e.g., Allison & Huang, 2005; Porto, 2007), my emphasis here is to take these not only as the mediating tools in the learning to facilitate the learning process, but more importantly they should be treated as learning products and occupy an appropriate proportion in students' overall academic records.

6.3.4 Implications for theory

Four key implications arise from this study for LA and teacher cognition theory, in relation to the philosophical origins of LA, the political view of LA, the approach of LA development through control shift, and a teacher cognition system of knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts.

Regarding the origins of LA, the review of relevant literature has shown that the notion of autonomy is embedded deeply in both Western philosophies and Chinese traditions. The beliefs about LA revealed in this study comply well with key aspects of autonomy embraced by Chinese traditional philosophies (e.g., the view of people self- and co-governing by LaoTze) and educational theories (e.g., "to teach in order not to teach" by Ye Shengtao). Such findings contradict the statement that LA is Western concept (Xu, 2007), but supports Shi and Zhou's (2007) appeal for a re-examination of so-called imported ideas without a pre-attached cultural label. An important implication from such compliance and discrepancy is a synergic perspective on the notion of autonomy, combining key aspects from different cultural traditions to create a new, and context-sensitive, construct of the notion.

While there are significant convergences about the meanings of LA in the West and in China, divergent points also exist. Noticeable ones are the different interpretations of learners' responsibility in China, and the underplayed political dimension of LA and the still dominant view of LA as self-study in this study (see Section 5.1.1). These dissonances suggest a contextualised attribute of the concept of LA, which thus requires context-specific definitions and clarifications of the concept. This is particularly important when the idea is highly recognised as a key educational goal and widely promoted on a national basis as is the case in the present Chinese educational climate.

As to the approaches to LA, this study contributes to the LA literature with the view that LA can be realised through an evolving process of control shifts in the Chinese education hierarchy. From the national authority prescribing LA as a key education goal at the top level to students as the recipients/carriers of autonomy at the bottom level, various intermediary components play a transitional role, passing on the control from one party to another. Specifically, four major transitions are involved: from the ministry to institutions, from institutions to management, from management to teachers, and from teachers to students. Aiming at the autonomy of learners who are the lowest level, a crucial matter in the transition is that all the parties/components involved must all agree on the common goal. However, it is in effect the biggest challenge, in that all the components in the control hierarchy/chain are living bodies (including the institutions), each of which has their right to claim and exercise their own autonomy. Thus contradictions arise; for example, when the principal in this study gave the executive director autonomy to promote his model, the teachers' autonomy was thereby constrained. Concerning this challenge, a tentative suggestion for response is a bottom-up order of priority in which autonomy of different parties are accommodated. Applying the principle to the above-mentioned example, to accommodate teachers' professional freedom, perhaps the ED's model should be less directive, or at least restrained to the extent of not hindering teachers' autonomy. Nevertheless, despite various practical challenges in applying the principle, it serves the fundamental goal, thus worth considering and further exploring.

The last theoretical implication worth attention is that the study distinguishes knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts in the teachers' complex mental world. As seen in the existing teacher cognition literature, there have been a number of concepts used (see summaries in Borg, 2006, pp. 36-39, 47-49) and caused a "definitional confusion" (Eisenhart et al., 1988). In response to Borg's (2006) call for shared sets of terms and following his definition of teacher cognition as "what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81), I tried in the discussions (see Sections 5.2, 5.3. & 5.5) to sort out the teachers' cognition about LA into three categories: their knowledge about the concept – what is LA, why it is important, and how to develop it; their beliefs about learners' potential to be autonomous and the effectiveness of the proposed approach through control shift; and their thoughts about their specific LA-oriented teaching behaviours – that is, their reflections on, in, and for actions in Farrell's (2007) term. By such categorising, knowledge may be seen to refer to the more general part which has been developed over time and appeared relatively stable; beliefs are of the attitudinal part, focusing more on feasibility and effectiveness; while thoughts are relatively temporary ideas about actions.

To summarise, this section has presented the theoretical implications of this study in four aspects: a synergic view of LA, attention to the contextual attributes of the promoted idea, an evolving process of control shift for LA development, and a categorisation of teacher cognition in terms of knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts.

By taking a holistic view of contextual factors through the lens of CHAT, this study has made valuable contribution to academic understanding of the operationalisation of LA in an authentic context. First of all, few published studies have investigated the relationship between cognition and practice in such depth as this multi-method exploration – most have relied upon self-report data with only a few observational data. In addition, fewer still have so carefully considered the impact of a positive policy towards LA by a school management – this has enabled me to relate the extent to which teachers are empowered to promote LA within a school context by taking into consideration the perspectives/directives of management and the effect these have on teacher's beliefs and practices. Most importantly, the application of the CHAT framework has enabled me to provide a grounded explanation of the complexity of contextual affordances – opportunities

and constraints – that, over time, have influenced the teachers' beliefs and practices. On the whole, this study has served as a valuable "test bed" (Robson, 2002, p. 182) in examining the feasibility and effectiveness of an innovative educational programmes of LA in an authentic context.

6.3.5 Implications for research

In addition to practical implications for LA implementation and theoretical ones for research, this study also has methodological implications in terms of data collection and analysis.

Regarding data collection, the study suggests the importance of adopting a multi-method approach to explore the complex system of teacher cognition in reference to their classroom practice. The study shows divergent findings in relation to teachers' beliefs about LA due to the adoption of different data gathering instruments – for example, beliefs revealed in this study through interviews and those in other studies in the literature through questionnaires. Such divergences expose the flaw of using a single method (especially a self-reported one) for the investigation of teachers' beliefs. The adoption of observational procedures allows opportunities to examine the reflection of teachers' beliefs in their practices. However, what can be observed is only behaviour, while the thinking behind the behaviours should be elicited through another tool. In this study, the post-lesson discussions were adopted as the instruments to explore in some depth the rationales for the observed actions. By triangulating data from the three methods – interviews, observations, and post-lesson discussions – both teachers' general LA knowledge and attitudes towards students' ability and their thoughts about the observed specific actions were explored. I was thus able to provide a relatively comprehensive interpretation of the teachers' cognitive system.

With respect to data analysis, this study contributes to teacher cognition research with a combined approach of grounded theory facilitated by an analytical framework (CHAT in this case). Given the naturalistic/interpretive nature of the overall research design of this study, grounded theory served as a comprehensive way of examining data as it emerged. The study presented a natural, unique and comprehensive picture of the occurrences in relation to the LA development in the

selected setting. However, to make sense of the extensive findings in various themes and patterns, a framework of some kind was needed. After a further in-depth consideration of the findings and a careful examination of the various analytical frameworks in the existing literature, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was selected as the most appropriate one, in that it places the findings in a multi-dimensional space, which shows both horizontally the intricate and interactive relationships between various elements involved in the investigated activity in the socio-cultural context, and vertically the dynamic changes of these elements over time. The findings out of the grounded analysis appeared rich, but messy; the CHAT framework put the messy findings in order, and provided a reasonable interpretation and explanation.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Given the limitations of this single study as acknowledged earlier, some suggestions are given in this section for further research.

First, regarding topics and research foci, this study has identified some interesting and under-investigated areas. One is the political dimension of LA claiming that autonomy is learners' right or human right. Further research about this topic could be into the distinction and connection between "power" and "right", which in Chinese language are homophones and are frequently used interchangeably but confusingly. Another possibility is a more comprehensive look at the whole control transitional process involving all the components (especially students) in the control hierarchy as mentioned in Section 6.3.4. It would be particularly interesting to look into the conflicts and/or contradictions along the transition and the affecting factors.

Second, given the case study nature of the present investigation and the impossibility for generalisation, similar case studies in a wider context (geographically and institutionally) would be important, so that the findings from this study can be compared and contrasted in order to provide a more comprehensive view of the implementation of LA in Chinese schools as well as teachers' beliefs about their practices in this respect. Also considering the private nature of the selected school in this study and its various LA-favourable features, it would be useful to have more studies in ordinary public schools, so as to

examine the impact of the contextual conditions.

Lastly, as educational innovations seem to be an on-going theme across institutions and over time, and teacher beliefs plays a crucial role in their implementation, I would suggest that, before the start of any innovations or reforms (e.g., critical thinking – currently another 'buzz word' in Chinese educational discussion), a careful examination of teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs and practices about the ideas is essential. The reason for this is self-evident, that if the teachers do not understand the idea or believe its usefulness and feasibility, the chance for its effective implementation or efforts towards this orientation would be slight.

6.5 Final word

This has been a long journey, from initial inspiration to completing the final version of the thesis, but it has been a very worthwhile one. Along the way, my understanding of the language teaching profession in which I have been involved for years has been enhanced in several respects. These include the various perspectives from which the notion of autonomy can be viewed, the role of control-shifting in the construction of autonomy, the relationship between what educators say about autonomy and their actual practice in the school context, as well as their complicated thinking processes in this regard. Convergences and divergences exist in various complex ways. In order to better achieve the intended goal of more autonomy – if the intention is genuine – all this complexity needs to be thoroughly understood, and carefully addressed, by the many practitioners, administrators, and policy makers involved in education.

I myself truly believe that to be autonomous is a worthy pursuit. I have been, and will continue to be, dedicated to its implementation in the classroom in as wide and profound ways as possible. As I write this, a student comment, which appeared in the minutes of a class representative meeting I recently read at my workplace, comes to mind: "My teacher spent ages giving instructions, not letting us do our work!" The sentiment echoes in my mind, and I cannot help but wonder: "Could that teacher be me?" Although I hold the firm belief that teachers should facilitate and support students to take control of their own learning, I am now only too clearly aware, through the writing of this thesis, that the reality in the

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classroom could well be very different. Hence, we as educators need to continuously reflect on our teaching, explore new approaches, and refine our teaching methods as needed to benefit students' learning.

So this particular journey has ended, and – as I hope is evident – I have learned a lot. But I realise that there is still much I need to learn through the following stages of academic, professional and personal life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Information letter to teacher participants

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Dear _____

I would very much appreciate your interest and participation in my PhD study.

By this study, I intend to explore how language teachers in a Chinese secondary school context, are coping with the new curriculum in relation to their developing student autonomy and cooperation. By examining the course of teachers' implementation of developing student autonomy and cooperation, I am hoping to construct and provide the educational administrators and teacher trainers a better understanding of teachers' real situation, so that they can better support for teachers in their professional development.

I would appreciate it very much if you could agree to be my participants and support me in my data collection in the following activities:

- Focus group discussion: First of all, you will be invited to take part in a focus group discussion in which you will follow a list of questions to have a discussion with other teacher participants. You will be encouraged to talk as much as possible. It will be at least an hour long and may be extended if most of the participants are still very much engaged. The discussion may be audio-recorded and I will provide you each with a summary of the discussion for you to check its accuracy and to add any other details.

- Observations: You will be requested to allow me to observe a unit of lessons of yours. You are encouraged to integrate some ideas you get from the group discussion into your lessons plan. Within six weeks after this group discussion, you're free to choose any unit you feel most comfortable with and invite me to observe. You will be requested to provide me with a copy of your lesson plans. If you permit me to audio or video-record the observed lessons, a copy of the recordings will be available on your request. You are also requested to suggest one or more activities which you organize or take charge of, are student-autonomy-and-cooperation-related and happen to take place during my data collection period, and invite me to observe. Field-notes will be taken while I observe.

- Stimulated recall sessions: Within 24 hours after each observation, you will be invited to take part in a stimulated recall session. You can choose as you wish to watch or listen to the recordings of your lesson, make comments on anything and answer my questions, or you may answer my questions and add comments on them. Each session is likely to take twenty minutes to an hour or so. Subject to your consent, the stimulated recall sessions may be audio-recorded, and I will provide you with a summary of the session for you to check its accuracy and to add any other details.

- Giving permission for me to recruit student participants in your class: After I finish observing your lessons, I would request you to allow me to talk to all students in your class and recruit the student participants in your class. To protect students' privacy, you will be asked to leave the classroom when I recruit student participants.

- Individual interview: You will finally be requested to do an individual interview with me, which will take you about 40 minutes. The interview may be audio-recorded, and I will provide you each with a summary of the interview for you to check its accuracy and to add any other details.

I should like to assure you that this research will adhere strictly to the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations (2008). Your rights, and those of all who volunteer to participate in the project, to privacy and anonymity will be entirely respected during and after the research. Efforts will be made to ensure that neither you nor the school will be identifiable in any way. All the data collected will be used for the purpose of this academic research. The collected data, to which only my supervisors and I have access, will be kept securely for a minimum of five years for academic review, and after that it will be destroyed or kept by me as you wish. No real names will be used in my PhD dissertation, or in any resulting publication or conference presentations.

I should also like to assure you that your participation in the data collection of this research is completely voluntary. You are free to participate or not, to participate fully or partially. You have the right to withdraw at any time and do not need to give any reason for doing so. You also have the right to decline to answer any particular question during the data collection, and withdraw any information you have provided up until analysis has commenced on your data.

Your time and help will be highly valued. Every effort should be made to minimize the workload

imposed on you and the possibility of interfering with your routine work.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the University of Waikato. Should you have questions concerning the ethical conduct of this project, please feel free to discuss with me in person, by email (xxx), or by phone (mobile NZ: xxx, mobile China:xxx), or contact the Secretary of the FASS HRE Committee by email (xxx). You can also contact my chief supervisor by email: Dr xxx (xxx), or my second supervisor Dr xxx by email (xxx), if you wish to discuss in Chinese language.

Your participation will be greatly appreciated. If you are willing to take part in this study, please read and sign the informed consent form below. For your personal records, it will be useful to keep a copy of this information letter and the completed consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Wang Yi

给教师研究对象的说明信

尊敬的老师，您好

首先感谢您百忙之中阅读本函。

我是 xxx 大学外国语学院的教师，现在新西兰怀卡托大学攻读博士学位，目前正在做关于'中国国家课程改革背景下教师对培养学生自主合作的认知与实践'的研究。我希望通过本项目的研究调查了解教师在贯彻执行课改政策倡导的'学生自主合作学习'种种有利或不利因素，揭示课改复杂性，以期一线教师工作引起更多关注并得到更多支持。我也希望，通过参与本研究项目，您对自己的教学会多一些思考，多一份了解。希望您在支持帮助我的同时，自己也有一些收益。

我热切期待您的兴趣与参与！如果您同意做本项目的研究对象，并在如下方面支持我的数据采集工作，我将万分感激。

首先，我想邀请您参加一个**焦点小组讨论**。每个小组 3-4 人，我会提前 2 天将拟讨论话题及问题发给您，您将就此与组内成员交流讨论大概 1 小时左右。如您同意，讨论将被录音。如果您不希望被录音，我将只在现场做笔记。讨论结束，我会尽快将讨论概要总结发送给您，供您更正不准确信息或补充其他信息。

如果您对讨论的内容感兴趣，愿意继续参与本项目，接下来的环节是**课堂观摩与讨论**，分为三个步骤： 课前讨论—课堂观摩—课后讨论。具体流程如下：

课前讨论：此环节采用您熟悉的'说课'的形式。您将备好的一节课说给我听，简要介绍本课的主要内容、设计思路及理由，我会视情况问您几个问题，以求更好地理解您的教学设计。本环节大约需要 15 分钟左右。如您同意，讨论将被录音。讨论结束，我会尽快将讨论概要总结发送给您，供您更正不准确信息或补充其他信息。

课堂观摩：在您许可的前提下，我将去 您的课堂观摩。我在观摩过程中，会做一些笔记，以备课后讨论之需。如果您同意录音，对我将是巨大的帮助，我将十分感激；如果您同意录像，对我将是最大的支持，我将万分珍惜。音频或视频文件，如您需要，我会拷贝或刻录光盘给您。

课后讨论：为求最大限值的新鲜记忆，我希望能在观摩结束后 24 小时之内与您就观摩的课程做一讨论。我会首先请您回顾总结，然后根据我的听课笔记问您一些问题。这一环节大约需要占用您 30 分钟左右。讨论结束，我会尽快将讨论概要总结发送给您，供您更正不准确信息或补充其他信息。

最后，我想对您作一次**个人采访**。我会至少提前 2 天将访谈内容发给您，本访谈大约需要占用您 40 分钟左右。如您同意，访谈将被录音。访谈结束，我会尽快将访谈总结发送给您，供您更正不准确信息或补充其他信息。

我郑重承诺，本研究将严格遵守《怀卡托大学人文研究道德规范》（2008 版）。在本研究过程中，我将完全尊重您的隐私权和匿名权，保证您的身份不会以任何方式被辨认出。所有数据只用于本项研究，只有我本人和我的导师有权接触。因学术需要，所采集数据至少保存五年备查，之后将按照您的意愿销毁或由我本人保存。数据采集一律使用化名，任何真名不会出现在我的毕业论文、公开发表论文或学术会议发言中。

同时，我郑重说明，您是否参与，全程参与或者部分参与，完全取决于您的意愿。您可以随时撤出，无需任何解释；对于不好作答的问题，您可以不予回答；在有关您的数据开始分析之前，您可以随时撤回您提供的数据。

我十分珍惜您的时间与帮助，并将尽全力减少对您造成额外负担及对您日常工作的干扰。

本项目已经怀卡托大学人文与社会科学学院人文研究道德委员会批准。如果您有任何疑问，您可以随时通过电子邮件（xxx）或手机（xxx）向我本人提出，也可以发送邮件给我的导师 xxx 博士(xxx）（她懂中文）。如果您有兴趣参与本项目研究，您只要发送一条短信至我的手机 xxx，或发邮件至 xxx，或 QQ 留言至：xxx，我会很快联系您。

热切期待您的支持！

祝您愉快！

xxx

2012-08-08

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form for teacher participants

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

[A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant]

I _____ consent to participate in Wang Yi's research project, as described in the above letter. By signing this form, I certify that I have been given an opportunity to read the information letter, to ask questions and have them answered. I agree to participate completely voluntarily in this project in the ways that I consent below.

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [√] the appropriate box for each point.

Statements	Yes	No
I understand that I do not have to participate in this project.		
I understand I have the right to withdraw myself at any time, or any information obtained from me up until analysis has commenced on my data.		
I agree to take part in the focus group discussion.		
I agree to the above discussion being audio-recorded.		
I agree to allow Wang Yi to observe a unit of lessons of mine.		
I agree to provide Wang Yi with the lesson plan for that unit.		
I agree to have the unit lessons video-recorded.		
I agree to have the unit lessons audio-recorded.		
I wish to have a copy of the video recordings of my lessons.		
I wish to have a copy of the audio recordings of my lessons.		
I am willing to have some of my after-class activities observed by Wang Yi.		
I agree to take part in the stimulated recall session after each observation.		
I agree to have the stimulated recall session audio-recorded.		
I give my permission to Wang Yi to recruit student participants in my class.		
I am willing to have an individual interview with Wang Yi		
I agree that this interview may be audio-recorded		
I understand that my rights to privacy and confidentiality are appropriately safeguarded		
I understand that any data collected during this study will be reported only in summary format and in such a manner that no individual participant can be identified.		
I understand that only Wang Yi and her academic supervisors will have access to the data collected for this research project.		
I agree that Wang Yi keeps the data securely for academic purpose for as long as she needs.		
I wish to receive a report of the findings resulting from this study		

Participant: _____   Researcher: _____

Signature: _____   Signature: _____

Date:_____   Date: _____

授权书

（本授权书一式两份，授权者与研究者各持一份）

本人 _____，同意参加 xxx 说明信中所述的研究项目。 本授权书一经签字，证明我已阅读说明信，已经询问相关问题并得到解答。我完全自愿在如下方面参加本研究。

（请完成本表格，在您同意的条款后方格内打勾。）

内容	是	否
我理解我不是必须参加本项目。		
我理解在关于我的数据分析开始之前，我随时可以退出本项目并索回关于我的数据。		
我同意 xxx 观摩我的课堂教学。		
我同意上述课堂观摩被录音。		
我同意上述课堂观摩被录像。		
我同意向 xxx 提供上述课堂教学的教案。		
我同意 xxx 参加本教研组评课讨论。		
我同意上述讨论被录音。		
我同意参加课后追溯讨论。		
我同意上述讨论被录音。		
我同意参加个人采访。		
我同意上述采访被录音。		
我理解我的隐私权将被完全保护。		
我理解本研究所收集数据只会以总结形式报道，我的真实身份将不会以任何形式被辨认出。		
我理解只有 xxx 及其导师有权接触为本研究所采集的数据。		
我同意所有数据至少保存 5 年备查。之后由 xxx 妥善保管。		
我希望分享本项目的研究成果。		

参与者(签名)：　　　　　　　　　研究者（签名）：

日期：　　　　　　　　　　　　　日期：

Appendix 3: Teacher participants' bio-data

T1: Na is the head of the English subject group, my son's English teacher and the one who encouraged her colleagues to participate in this study. She graduated in 2006 with BA, and worked for three years in a tertiary-level vocational school in a capital city, where she was happy with the well-motivated students who were keen to learn, but got frustrated with the large proportion of students in her class uninterested in English. Given the fact that most of her students were those who failed university/high school entrance exams, so were denied an opportunity to go further up, she then expressed her sympathy towards those students with low motivation, saying it is understandable that the students were demotivated when they were struggling too much. Changing her workplace from tertiary to secondary level was a big decision that she made with determination after hesitation. She hesitated because it is seen as insensible and unusual to make a downward movement in one's career in the Chinese context. However, she did it because she wanted to trace back to the secondary schools to find out the killing factors that eroded the students' interest in learning, generally, and specifically in English, and she wanted to see if she could make some differences. In respect to this school specifically, she assumed that the private nature of the school would allow for more freedom or space that she would need and enjoy to make adjustments and/or changes as necessary in her teaching, not necessarily mature though, by which she would finally develop her own way of teaching. Whereas in a state public school, it might be that she endeavoured to pass the mandatory pedagogy and psychology exams and finally squeezed in with a registered position, only to find that she had no choice but to accept whatever had been shaped by others and her nose led by others.

T2: Yu's position at Zia is a bit twisting. She is among the top management of Zia, the No 1 person in general charge of the English program and team, but she actually teaches two classes as most other teachers, and works under Na, the English group head. She is a top among the bottom along the hierarchy chain of Zia, with the chief principal on the top and the majority of teachers at the bottom.

She graduated in 2001 from a renowned university in a capital city and worked for three years after graduation in an English training department of the same university. Attracted by Principal Wang's educational vision, she joined the first K12 school that Wang established in the south of China and changed her career from tertiary to secondary level as Na, but for a different reason. Family is a main factor that she changed her workplace again, but still 'to follow Wang', she said.

T3: Xue graduated in 2005 and had been working for 6 years in an after-school centre attached to Dulangkou, a school well-known across China for its student-centred learning. As suggested in the name, an after-school centre opens after school hours, which means the staff there start to work when others finish and are left idle when others work. While being well-recognized as well as well-paid there, she quitted and joined Zia because firstly of the demanding unusual working hours, the lack of professional development opportunity due to too frequent changing of students, and last but not least her personal admiration of Wang's educational vision.

T4: Yuan graduated in 2002 at the age of 22, spent a year for the post-graduate entrance exam but failed, and then started to work, first in a bookstore, then a small English training school and finally a high school in a seaside city. She had been teaching there for 8 years before joining Zia in 2011 primarily because of family moving to the city where Zia is in. Another major factor that drove her here is her favour of the not-too-commercial atmosphere that Wang developed, which distinguished Zia from other private schools always talking about seeking and keeping more students for survival.

T5: Fang graduated in 2007 and worked for two years in the high school where she did her teaching practicum, met the deputy principal who was also an English teacher, was recognized for the demonstrated teaching potential and therefore employed. She joined Zia in

2010 primarily because she established her family here and also her admiration of Wang's motto 'to love every student unconditionally', which echoes her own dream to be a good teacher by treating all students equally without looking down upon the academically weak students.

T6: Ying graduated in 2000 with a BA. Her previous working experience included teaching different papers in a private tertiary institution for 7 years, teaching New Concept English and IELTS in a renowned training school branch and acting as a deputy principal in a private school with huge amount of job duty (such as recruiting students and teachers, receiving parents, dealing with daily classroom trivial, etc.). Considering a balance between family and work, she decided to stop drifting and to stick to a local place. Another factor she considers as important for a good working environment is culture, which she found missing in the previous working places. It was the relatively high standards for employment that she found from internet about Zia that interested her to submit a job application here. 'A place with such high standards for recruiting staff should be a good place', she remarked. One of Wang's values that she appreciates is 'never give up any student', which she further commented that there must be something good in a student no matter how weak he/she is. She joined Zia in 2011 with suspect of people's enthusiasm and care to students and colleagues, which seemed to her too warm and too good to be real. She remained as a bystander/onlooker for a while without truly engaging herself into this team until she was appointed as a form teacher of a special class, which she described as problematic. She described the class as 'noisy as a market' in doubt if they can be disciplined. She took the challenge with a feeling that she was the one capable enough of transforming the class as well as the students.

T7: With a two-year diploma qualification, Kun has been teaching English for 20 years, with the first 10 in a public junior secondary school and the second 10 in a couple of private senior highs. He joined Zia in 2012 for family reason with nothing particular about the school's values or the principal's vision. He described himself as pretty adjustable he does as the Romans do if in Rome. It's hard to say, he says, which model or approach is better in such a short time.

T8: Jun worked for two years in an American-brand English training school, where English is the working language and his spoken English got improved greatly due to that. Textbooks he has used include the popular New Concept, Cambridge, etc., there were both adult and child students. His job duty was mainly teaching at the beginning and shifted to more administration, which he later felt as a bit waste of time and started to think of a change. In admiration of Wang's educational beliefs and vision, he joined Zia not long after Zia was established. Having got used to English environment and English way of thinking, he found his Chinese language ability, which he described as 'never good', was affected. The change of his job from training nature to normal basic school education imposed quite some pressure on him, which was partially from parents' high expectations of good academic grades and the relatively weak foundation of the student. He was hoping the two very different working experiences would take him to more maturity.

T9: Hua graduated in 2006 and she was in her 7th year of teaching in 2012. She used to work in a private school attached to a public one, called 'school in school', in which there are both ordinary classes and advanced ones and she taught both. She had covered the whole round of 4 years (6-9) of junior secondary education. For family reason she was in need of a job in this city and she considered this school with some knowledge she had had from her niece schooling at Zia. Apart from Wang's educational beliefs and visions, she admires Wang personally very much, saying that she enjoys listening to him talk or present and she learns a lot from him.

Appendix 4: Letter of Ethical Approval

Geography Programme
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4046
www.waikato.ac.nz/wfass/subjects/geography

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

5 January 2011

Wang Yi
Roger Barnard
Maria Galikowski
Rosemary De Luca

Dear Wang Yi

Re: *Teachers' understanding and practice in fostering student student autonomy and cooperation: A case study in a Chinese secondary school*

Thank you for submitting your amended application to the Committee. The amendment covers the matters raised very well and I am happy to give you formal ethical approval.

I wish you well with your research.

Kind regards

John Campbell
Acting Chair
FASS Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 5: The originally-planned survey and workshops

LEARNER AUTONOMY QUESTIONNAIRE

尊敬的老师，您好！

感谢您参与本项关于'教师培养学生自主与合作学习的信念与实践'研究的问卷调查。

学生自主、合作学习长期以来备受国内外学者关注，国家教育部 2001 的国家课程改革也大力提倡自主合作课堂，本项目旨在调查教师对培养学生自主合作的信念与实践，您的回答是了解教师对该理念的认识及实施情况的重要依据，对该研究意义重大。

本问卷共 4 部分 41 小项，除最后一个开放式问题，其余均为选择题。完成本问卷大约需要您 10-15 分钟的时间。本问卷完全匿名，请放心表达您最真实的想法。如果您有任何疑问，欢迎随时通过以下方式联系我。

再次感谢您的支持与合作。

xxx

xxx 大学 人文学院 在读博士

xxx 外国语学院 教师

手机：xxx QQ：xxx 邮箱：xxx

I. 您对学生自主与合作的理解

以下是国内外文献中关于学生自主与合作的一些说法，请问您在何种程度上同意或不同意这种说法?
请在1-5中选出最符合您观点的答案（单选）。

1=非常同意   2=基本同意   3= 不确定   4=不太同意   5= 非常不同意

文献中的说法	您的观点
1. 自主学习就是学生自己学习。	1 2 3 4 5
2. 自主学习就是学生主动学习。	1 2 3 4 5
3. 自主学习主要是一种对自己学习负责的意识和态度。	1 2 3 4 5
4. 自主的学生独立，不需要他人帮助。	1 2 3 4 5
5. 自主是一种与生俱来的本能。	1 2 3 4 5
6. 学生自主能力有弱有强，但通过教师有意识培养，都会逐步增强。	1 2 3 4 5
7. 学生自主能力增强，学习成绩一定会相应提高。	1 2 3 4 5
8. 培养学生自主，老师需要有自主意识。	1 2 3 4 5
9. 培养学生自主，老师要给学生做事的机会，让学生参与。	1 2 3 4 5
10. 培养学生自主，老师要给学生选择的机会，让学生决策。	1 2 3 4 5
11. 培养学生自主，老师要下放权力给学生。	1 2 3 4 5
12. 培养学生自主，就是老师少管或不管学生。	1 2 3 4 5
13. 与听老师讲解相比，小组讨论更有助于培养学生自主性。	1 2 3 4 5
14. 自主合作课堂，教师与学生可以知识共建。	1 2 3 4 5
15. 自主强调独立，合作强调互相依赖，两者不兼容。	1 2 3 4 5

II. 您的教学实践

以下是文献中提到的一些教师培养学生自主合作的做法，在您的教学实践中，您经常采用以下做法吗？ 请在 1-5 中选出最符合您实际情况的答案（单选）。

1 = 从来不　　2 = 每学期1-5次　　3 = 每学期6-10次　4 = 每学期11-20次　　5 = 每学期20次以上

教师培养学生自主合作的做法	您的实践
16. 引导学生确定自己的学习目标。	1 2 3 4 5
17. 引导学生充分发现可利用的学习资源。	1 2 3 4 5
18. 让学生选择学习内容或方法。	1 2 3 4 5
19. 引导学生制定可行性计划。	1 2 3 4 5
20. 引导学生监控计划执行情况。	1 2 3 4 5
21. 引导学生回顾反思总结。	1 2 3 4 5
22. 给学生一个任务，让学生全权负责完成。	1 2 3 4 5
23. 开展小组讨论，让学生在交流协商中学习。	1 2 3 4 5
24. 组织专题讨论，培养学生自主学习意识。	1 2 3 4 5
25. 组织专题讨论，培养学生合作学习技能。	1 2 3 4 5

III. 您的反馈与评论

以下是文献中教师培养学生自主合作实践的一些反馈和评论，请问这些反馈和评论在何种程度上描述了您的教学现状？请在 1-5 中选出最符合您实际情况的答案（单选）。

1 = 非常一致　　2 = 基本一致　　3 = 不确定　　4 =不太一致　　5 = 非常不一致

教师反馈与评论	与您的现状一致程度
26. 开展自主合作学习是自上而下的改革，教育领导者决策，一线教师执行。	1 2 3 4 5
27. 我们学校积极鼓励自主合作课堂。	1 2 3 4 5
28. 我的同事积极探索实践学生自主合作学习。	1 2 3 4 5
29. 我的学生家长支持教师组织学生自主合作学习。	1 2 3 4 5
30. 我的学生们喜欢小组讨论。	1 2 3 4 5
31. 我发现组织学生自主合作学习很有挑战。	1 2 3 4 5
32. 我发现组织学生自主合作学习很有乐趣。	1 2 3 4 5
33. 我发现学生自主合作课堂不好控制。	1 2 3 4 5
34. 课程紧，任务重，我发现自主合作学习不适合我的教学。	1 2 3 4 5
35. 我不确定自主合作课堂的效果，倾向传统教学，安全稳当。	1 2 3 4 5
36. 体验式自主合作学习培训，对组织学生自主合作学习很有启发。	1 2 3 4 5
37. 与同事交流讨论，对我组织学生合作学习很有启发。	1 2 3 4 5
38. 教学反思，对我组织学生合作学习很有帮助。	1 2 3 4 5
39. 组织学生自主合作学习过程中产生的问题，令我对教学研究产生兴趣。	1 2 3 4 5
40. 教学研究对我培养学生自主合作帮助很大。	1 2 3 4 5

IV. 您遇到的困难或挑战

41. 在您的教学实践中，您遇到过一些困难或挑战吗? 请根据您的个人情况，在**右栏或右栏**中写出您的一个问题。

如果您一直在实践自主合作课堂，请在下面写出一个您在该方面实践中感觉棘手、亟待解决的问题	如果自主合作课堂不适合您的教学，请在下面写出一个您在常规课堂教学中感觉棘手、亟待解决的问题

为 方 便 数 据 分 类 ， 请 您 提 供 以 下 基 本 信 息 ， 在 符 合 您 个 人 情 况 的 选 项 上 打 钩 。
（本信息只用作本问卷分析，不作其他用途，请放心作答。）

1.您的性别：① 男 ② 女

2.您的教龄：① 新教师，初上岗 ② 3 年及以下 ③ 超过3年不足6 年 ④ 超过6年不足10 年 ⑤10 年及以上

3.您的最高学历：① 中专及以下 ②大专 ③本科 ④ 研究生

4.您目前所教的学段：① 1—5 年级 ② 6—7 年级 ③ 8—9 年级

5.您的任教科目：① 语文 ② 英语 ③ 数理化 ④ 史、地、生、政、信息 ⑤ 音体美劳 ⑥ 其他

WORKSHOP SCENARIOS

1. 在自主合作课堂中，老师希望学生积极发言，又感觉课堂纪律不好控制。请您描述一下您理想的课堂状态，比如您希望学生'放开'到什么程度？'听话'到什么程度？

2. 学生个性不一，有的老抢着发言，有的非常沉默。试想，我们把'外向者'分一组，'内向者'分一组，会怎样呢？请您设想一下这样分组可能的利弊。

3. 学生水平不一，接受能力有快有慢。试想，如果让进度快的给进度慢的当老师，会怎样呢？请您设想一下这样做可能的利弊。

4. 大部分老师认为，让学生自主合作，老师的备课量不是减小，而是加大了。你觉得同行集体备课能帮助解决这个问题吗？请就您的个人经历谈谈教师合作备课的利弊。

5. 80% 以上的老师认为，组织学生自主合作很有乐趣，请与大家分享一下您的乐趣。

6. 学生经常在固定的小组活动活动，渐渐会摸出规律，形成一些定式，但经常变换也麻烦。请集思广益与大家分享一些快捷分组的好方法。

7. 很多老师感觉课堂上组织学生自主合作，很难完成规定的教学内容。假如我们有3个问题要讨论，但时间只够充分讨论并让学生消化吸收1个。试想，我们只讨论一个，讨论透，其他2个留给学生自己思考或者直接把答案给他们。您觉得学生深入讨论这一个问题的过程中的得到的锻炼，终将会潜移默化为思考能力吗？您会这样做吗？为什么？

8. 很多老师感觉部分学生不积极发言很令人头疼。请问您如何看待不发言的学生？请您分析一下不发言学生的种种可能。

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK FORM

谢谢您的宝贵意见
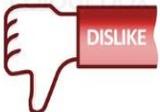
两点您喜欢的	两点您不喜欢的	两点搬到您的课堂可用的	两点搬到您的课堂行不通的
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.

Appendix 6: Sample of field notes
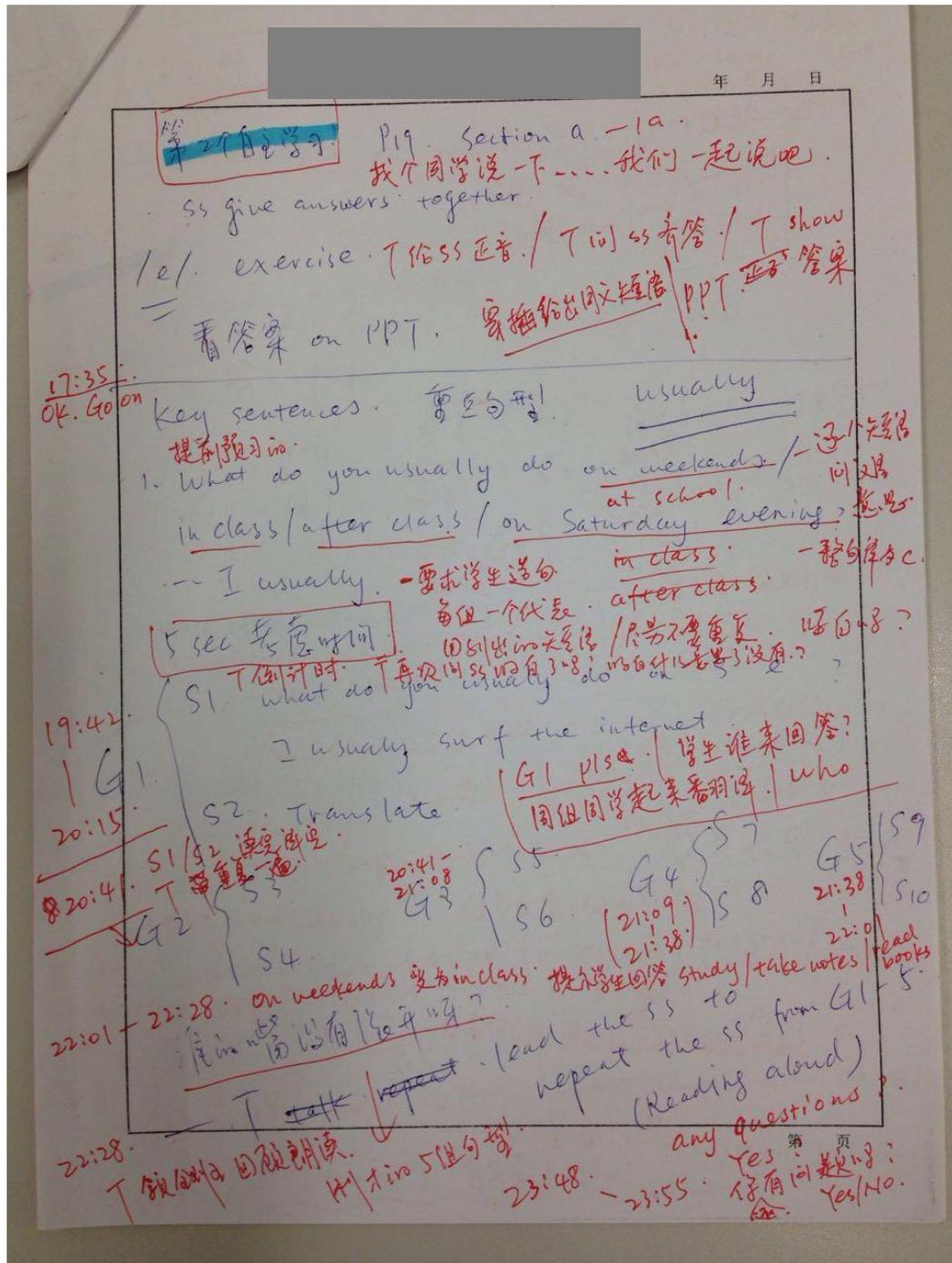
Appendix 7: Summary of observed lessons

T	Year	Date	Type of lesson
T1	Year 9	11/10/2011	open lesson in 1st round
		23/11/2012	a lesson given on Open-to-Parents Day
		29/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
		17/12/2012	open lesson in 3rd round for teaching competition
T2	Year 7	20/09/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		22/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
T3	Year 6	18/10/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		06/12/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
		14/12/2012	open lesson in 3rd round for teaching competition
T4	Year 7	20/09/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		08/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
T5	Year 8	12/09/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		01/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
		05/11/2012	follow-up normal lesson
T6	Year 8	01/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
		02/11/2012	follow-up normal lesson
T7	Year 9	13/09/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		08/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
T8	Year 8	11/10/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		29/11/2012	open lesson in 2nd round
T9	Year 6	18/10/2012	open lesson in 1st round
		06/12/2012	open lesson in 2nd round

Appendix 8: ACE Class Learning Guide

七 年级 英语 学科导学稿（编号：7-3 ）

班级：____ 姓名：____ 组号：____ 时间： 年 月 日

课题： **Unit7 How was your weekend?** 课型： **writing** 主备：_____ 审核：_____

一．**Language goals 语言目标。**

To use the simple past to talk about the past.

二．自主学习。

1. 写出下列动词的过去式。

talk_____ walk_____ study_____ stay_____ stop_____ shop_____
clean_____ play_____ ask_____ practice_____ improve_____ like_____
am_____ is_____ are_____ go_____ do_____ have _____
write_____ spend_____
drink _____

2.写出下列过去式的原形动词。

sat_____ watched_____ took_____ ate _____drove_____ tried_____
ran_____
could_____ slept_____

3.写出至少三个表示过去的时间表达。

三、**Writing: My Life Two Years Ago**

1. Talk in groups and talk with Angel

2. Write it within 10 minutes.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.Exchange your writings with your group members. 组内成员之间交换作文，学习别人的长处并帮其找出存在的问题。将你从别人作文中学习到的好句子记下来。

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

四、**This is what angel's life was like 12 years ago.**

Twelve years ago, I *studied* in xxx University, xxx, xxx Province. I *spent* more than seven hours learning English a day. I *had* a best friend called Tina who *was* a very kind and beautiful girl with long straight hair. We often *talked* in English, so my English *improved* a lot.

When I *was* in xxx University, I *ran* in the early morning from Monday to Friday and I hardly ever *ate* junk food. What's more, I *had* a very good sleeping habit. I *tried* to go to bed before 9:30 at night. But on weekends, I *went* to bed late because I *could* get up late next morning. Good sleep *helped* me study better.

During the four years, my father often *drove* me to school but sometimes I *took* the train. I *loved* taking the train because I *could* go to school with my best friend Tina and enjoy the beautiful scene(景色) on the way.

五、**Assignment**（作业）

1 To rewrite 'My Life 2 Years Ago'

2 阅读教程前两篇：泛读&精读。

Appendix 9: ACE Class Teacher Evaluation Standards

自主高效课堂评价标准

___日 星期____ 评委____

序号	维度	分值	观察事实评价标准
1	学习的自主性及其效度	10	小组讨论前先有独立思考，展示讲解前有独立思考与小组合作，展示讲解前有学困收集。学生能自学的部分老师不讲，学生能讲的部分老师不讲。自主学习安排的必要性与合理性。自主学习的有效性
2	合作学习的运用及其效度	10	合作学习安排的必要性与合理性；合作学习的组织建设、分类运用；合作学习的规则建立与运用；合作学习的有效性
3	探究交流展示、补充质疑的运用及课堂生成度	10	探究、交流、展示的运用 学生有积极主动的补充、质疑、生疑、辨疑、生成
4	学困消化、反馈检测的知识过关运用及其效度	10	有学困消化，有反馈检测，有知识过关，且运用有效
5	学习的热度	10	学生学习有兴趣、有激情，积极主动探究、尝试，积极主动地合作、交流、解决疑难、帮扶、学困消化。
6	参与的广度	10	各环节中学生是全面参与，如展示时的组内展示设计，如展示时对听展示学生参与度的设计，听展示后的学困消化的检测而从而使学生全面参与的设计等。
7	学习的密度、思维的宽度和深度	10	学习的各环节转换紧凑、迅捷，学习容量大。思维的横向拓展、纵深拓展。
8	学生的风度	10	思考沉静深入；合作热情有序；展示有激情有自信、规范有条理
9	点拨、讲解的精度	10	教师的点拨、追问、补充、质疑精彩到位。教师的分析、引导、讲解、拓展精炼。对学生自学预习的问题设计与方法指导恰当。
10	点评的温度（评价的激励与导向）	10	教师的评价有激励与导向作用。有对组织效率的点评，有对学习质量、学习状态、学习积极性的点评。纯熟恰当地运用评价体系。
合计	主要从学生学习状态与学习效果进行评价	100	自主、合作、高效

注：1、前四个维度也可因学习内容的特点、学生认知基础、学生学习进度而缺失某个维度，此时缺失的维度的分值平均分摊给前四个维度的其它项中（前四个维度的总分值不变）。2、各维度的二级评价细目标准中可以缺失某些项目，该维度的总分值不变

自主高效课堂评分表

授课人：____ 班___ 科目 __月__日 星期__节次__ 评委____

序号	维度	分值	观察事实（精彩细节、精彩片断、精彩设计、重构建议等，课程结构记录于合计栏）	评分
1	学习的自主性及其效度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
2	合作学习的运用及其效度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
3	探究交流展示、补充质疑的运用及其生成度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
4	学困消化、反馈检测的运用及其效度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
5	学习的热度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
6	参与的广度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
7	思维的宽度与深度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
8	学生的风度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
9	点拨、讲解的精度	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
10	点评的温度（评价的激励与导向）	10		A10☐ B8☐C6☐ D4☐
合计		100		

此表与导学稿装订在一起上交，如果课堂结构、精彩细节、重构建议记在导学稿上，则此表中的观察事实栏目可略记，如导学稿中未评录，则此表观察事实栏目要详记。

Appendix 10: Sample of Open Discussion summary

2012-09-21

Yu （00：10-03：15）：

一平日3人集体备课，今日同课异构；

一没有做听力，最终是3a课文，前面为铺垫，按照课本流程，从对话到任务完成；

一没有导学稿，课件内容清晰，survey设计每组一张，每人做一项；

一学生整体口语水平、英语实力平日强，今日有些紧张，影响进度，致拖堂；

一Survey部分设计3分钟，2分钟提问，1分钟汇报，本应完成；

一本课前只稍学单词，没有预习，学生短语掌握还好，但汇报survey results整句输出不理想，可能对百分比与some、most、no等转变不是十分适应，整体效果欠佳。

C1 （03：28-07：00）

一 学习的态度，学到很多，尤其漂亮的口语；疑：英语指令，大部分学生能听懂否? 个别基础弱的同学，恐跟不上。答：能，一直如此，学生已习惯；

一备课充分，英语氛围好；

一步骤清晰，从易到难；

一学生被点到才行动，略显被动；

一导入部分跟生活息息相关，自然；

一受be+doing影响，学生出现'how often do you swimming?'，建议明确并强化动词形式；

一'举三反一'之措，给三个例子，学生总结rules，让学生明确，用更多的例子操练。

Chen （07：08-12:30）

一 评课要求：对他人意见，每位老师做好记录；评课后要形成共识，总结本课亮点与不足；评课要有专人记录，通报共识结果；评课结果上传；

一评课中的问题，文科学科偏重教材研究，对课堂结构、学生管理及课堂有效性当加以更多关注；

一外行评课的好处；

一 两堂课共性：学生参与的广度和密度有待提高，有些学生整节课没有说话，40分钟内有些学生参与的只是听和看表演，学生动口说、动笔写的机会有待进一步讨论；转变教的方式，学的方式，学生需动口动笔，虽有师问生答，大多数同学参与力度不够。

Cui （13：40-17:00）：

一 第4单元第一节，办公同室，集体备课方便，第一课时通常为句型展示，本课课文较乱，所以自己穿成对话，最后让学生做对话；

一导学稿自主学习任务之一，预习19-20页中的短语并于课前展示于黑板，此部分短语对话练习要用到；

一3个句型：1）what do you usually do? 2) how often do you…? 3) what's your favorite…? 句型1用于辅助，2是重点，3是拓展；

一 本意每个同学都说一下，但有些学生稍差，参与广度差些；小组合作，设计组内有说有写，平均参与；5班学生训练有素，口语整体水平好，1、2、3班若自始训练，可能孩子也已适应，但目前抓基础为主，读读背背练对话，对话从以前有进步；

一考虑二三人称转换训练，时间紧张；

一听力通常设在第二课时，本课没设为公开课特地听力，平常课对待；第一节课主要解决生词短语句型，生词早自习稍稍涉及。

C1 （17:05- 21:08）

一 课前预习做得好，惑：是否通常这样? 若非下午第一节课，中间课时的课前黑板展示的操作性?如果堂展示，恐占用太长时间；英语数学不同，展示有难度，展示错误，恐加深对错误的印象；

一学生总结短语的方法好，老师讲解细致，并在书上标出，自己理解记忆，学生内化好；

一学生面对面做对话或更好；

一3个句型组内对练，只显示hi、hello，如呈现句型，可有助学生pair work练习；

一练习句型未必要转换为第三人称，有限时间，不要贪心；

一Twice发音；

C2 （21：13 – 29：44）

一课文背诵，学生纠错，是个小高潮；

一句型练习时单组完成后集体诵读有助课堂管理，并有助训练学生瞬间记忆；

一学生参与广度不错；

一句型讲解及练习，目标设计明确；

一前面略急，偶有打断学生；

一

练习对话学生自问自答，另一人翻译，如设3个学生，模拟真实环境，两人对话或可更好；翻译环节很好，监管全班注意力，如选择远距离他组同学，可能效果更好；

一不同年级差距很大，7年级同学扭转态度是关键。

C3 （29:49—38:04）

一Check前后黑板时，如结合加减分，效果可能更好，如新短语加分，出错减分；

一

句型练习前可让学生brainstorm一些动词短语，采取比赛形式，加减分，可激发兴趣，也可解决句型练习部分学生选词略贫乏的问题；

一频率副词可列表，让学生交替使用练习；频率副词位置点一点；

一学生整句回答意识略欠；

一

可省时环节：学生自问自答另一人翻译，可不翻译，问他组同学转换人称；不必太过担心孩子的接受能力，教师目标可适当高些；

一惑：学生自问自答环节要培养的意识是什么？可能结合pair work更好些；

一建议增加些书面练习；

一组间竞争再加强些；

C4 （38:05-42:58）

一学生背诵，学生纠错好，抓住学生注意力；

一思路青梳流畅；

一练习较多，每个学生都参与不现实；

一目标明确，3个句型；

一课前预习内容爬板方法好，各组全展示，教师全讲解，用时较多，未必所有组展示，可布置任务，教师抽查；

一分组展示，教师颁奖好，如学生颁奖或可更好；

一学生翻译，建议老师指定学生，提醒走神同学，组织课堂的有效手段；

一Pair work 建议学生去前台展示，效果或更好，同时放学生依赖课本；

一学生动手机会略少，毕竟考试落实笔头；

C5 （43:02- 50:20）

一思路完整青析；

一频率副词可加进去；

一词组部分学生相对操练，可通过齐读、轮读多种方式加快速度；

一学生自述很有必要，但时间不宜过长，可分出一半时间pair work，并作角色转换；

一二三人称过渡自然，初二学生当多练；

一此处学生两个疑惑1）I usually doing… 2) I am usually do…两个学生易混淆点，教师须点明；

一My favorite movies is 。。。类句型常见错，需点明；

一书面联系5分钟，小组pair work
变为抢答形式，激发学生思维，最后让学生用三个句型自编一组对话写下来；也可结合后面的survey，让学生把报告写出来，也可换频率副词；可借本课结尾与下节课开始衔接；

一减分的效果，可激励学生变负为正；

一同课异构形式好，可互相学习，防集体备课久而生堕。

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Appendix 11: Post-lesson discussion schedule

Name	Year level	Dates of observations	Dates of post-lesson discussions
T1	Year 9	11/10/2011	18/10/2012
		23/11/2012	03/12/2012
		29/11/2012	
		17/12/2012	Combined into interview
T2	Year 7	20/09/2012	26/09/2012
		22/11/2012	27/11/2012
T3	Year 6	18/10/2012	23/12/2012
		06/12/2012	07/12/2012
		14/12/2012	Combined into interview
T4	Year 7	20/09/2012	25/09/2012
		08/11/2012	08/11/2012
T5	Year 8	12/09/2012	14/09/2012
		01/11/2012	08/11/2012
		05/11/2012	
T6	Year 8	01/11/2012	02/11/2012
		02/11/2012	07/11/2012
T7	Year 9	13/09/2012	16/09/2012
		08/11/2012	Combined into interview
T8	Year 8	11/10/2012	19/10/2012
		29/11/2012	04/12/2012
T9	Year 6	18/10/2012	22/10/2012
		06/12/2012	Combined into interview

Appendix 12A: Interview outline with teacher participants

访谈教师问题提纲

1. 如果您不介意，能否首先请您谈谈您之前的教学经历，以及您来到这所学校工作的主要动力或原因？

   If you don't mind, would you please tell me something about your previous teaching experience, and the major motives or reasons which brought you to work in this school?

2. 请您结合您的教学实践谈谈您对学生自主与合作的理解，自主合作对学生终生发展的作用，以及这两者之间的关系。比如，如果学生自主、合作学习能力较强，会有哪些具体的表现形式，这是否是学生未来发展必备的能力，学生是否在合作学习中逐步更加自主等等。

   In relation to your teaching practice, how do you understand student autonomy and collaboration (SAC), its significance to students' life-long development and the relationship between autonomy and collaboration? For example, by what evidence would you define a student as an autonomous as well as collaborative learner? Is SAC dispensable to students' future development, and why if yes? Do students develop more autonomy in collaborative learning?

3. 您能否结合我校'自主高效课堂评价标准'，谈谈'自主合作课堂'在您当前环境和条件下的适用性？比如，就目前您的个人条件、所处的环境、所带的学生等等现实情况，您在实践这种教学模式中有哪些收获，哪些困难，哪些做法您会继续，哪些您可能调整或放弃，以及您这样做的原因等等。

   In relation to the in-use 'class evaluation criteria', how applicable do you feel the SAC mode is to your present environment and conditions? For example, in the reality of your personal background, the present setting and your students, in what aspects have you felt the SAC mode is good and worth-promoting, and in what aspects have you encountered difficulties? In relation to your practice, what specific practices will you continue, adjust or give up? And why?

4. 为了培养学生自主与合作，您认为教师自主与合作是必要的吗？比如，您希望教师在哪些方面能够自主，又在哪些方面需要与同事合作，您的自主与与同事间的合作对您培养学生这些能力有哪些启示和帮助等等。

   To develop SAC, do you think teacher autonomy and collaboration is necessary? For example, in what aspects or what way do you prefer to be more autonomous, or to work with your colleagues? How does your own experience imply or inform your implementation of developing SAC?

5. 在开展自主合作课堂，培养学生自主合作能力方面，您接受过一些怎样的指导和培训？您还希望得到一些怎样的支持和帮助？

   Regarding implementing the SAC mode, what guide or training have you received? And what support of help do you wish to have in the future?

Appendix 12B: Interview outline with the principal

访谈校长问题提纲

1. 您认为国家基础教育课程改革最想改变或革除的是什么？这与我校提出的**既要考出好成绩，又要素质全面发展**在多大程度上是一致或不一致的？

   What do you think the Education Ministry of China most wants to reform or abolish wants to reform through the national curriculum reform in basic education? To what extent does the national vision converge or diverge with your commitment that students will both do well in exams and develop in an all-round way?

2. 您如何看待自主与合作能力对于学生终生发展的作用？

   How do you see the significance of SAC to students' life-long development?

3. 您对学生自主是怎样理解的？合作学习呢？这两者的关系？

   How do you understand student autonomy, collaborative learning and the relationship between the two?

4. 您如何看待教师自主合作与学生自主合作关系？

   How do you see the relationship between TAC (teacher autonomy and collaboration) and SAC?

5. 为了培养学生自主与合作，您对老师有什么期望和要求？您觉得教师在实践这一理念过程中会有哪些困难或挑战？学校做了哪些或者打算做些什么来缩短这一差距？

   Regarding developing SAC, what expectations or requirements do you have for your teachers? What difficulties or challenges do you think the teachers may encounter? What have the school done or will do to support and help the teachers?

Appendix 12C: Interview outline with the ED

Interview questions with ED - 1

1. 您对学生自主、合作学习是怎样界定和理解的?

    How do you define and/or understand student autonomy and collaborative learning?

2. 自主、合作学习对于学生成长发展的意义? （或您为什么积极推广这一教学理念或方式?）

    How significant do you think autonomy and collaborative learning are for students' life-long development? (or: why are you promoting the SAC-oriented mode of teaching and learning?)

3. 您预见教师在培养学生自主合作方面可能会遇到哪些困难?

    Do you predict that teachers may encounter some difficulties in developing SAC? What difficulties might they encounter?

4. 针对预期困难，学校（或您的教改项目）做了哪些工作对教师予以指导?

    In relation the predicted difficulties, what have you or the school management done to train or guide the teachers?

5. 学校（或您的教改）措施的已经见到或可以预见哪些成效?

    Have you seen any effect of the innovation you're taking so far? Or what effects can you predict, if not yet?

Interview questions with ED - 2

1. 您发现老师们在教学方面作出了哪些较大改变?

    What major changes have you seen the teachers have made in their teaching?

2. 这些改变中，哪些您认为效果比较理想? 哪些与您期望和倡导的还不是十分一致?

    Among the above changes teachers have made, which ones do you think have met or exceeded your expectations? And which ones are still not quite what you're promoting?

3. 通过你的观察，您觉得目前老师们课改的难点和弱点是什么?

    Through your observations, in what aspects have you found the teachers feel difficult or weak, in their implementation of the innovation?

4. 针对以上事实，您会在哪些方面，以什么样的形式对老师作进一步的指导、培训和扶持?

    In relation to the above situations, what will you or the school management do to further guide, train and support the teachers?

Appendix 13: ACE Class Learning Guide template

XXXXXX 外国语学校 ＿＿年级 ＿＿ 学科导学稿（编号：＿＿）

班级：＿＿ 姓名：＿＿ 组号：＿＿时间： 年 月 日

课题：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿课型：＿＿＿＿＿主备：＿＿＿＿＿ 审核：＿＿＿＿

Appendix 14: Observation Extracts

Observation Extract #2: T3.L1.O: Pre-lesson Presentation

01	Ss	Hello, everyone. Look, there is an orange. In the fruits, I like it best. This oranges has a beautiful look. I was [xxx] it [xxx]. I find it [xxx]. What can it do? Oh, there is er a groce shop. I can buy oranges in the shop. Thank you. {S1 bows to show thanks. Ss clapped hands in rhythm.} I ask er I ask some questions for you. Er er er what can I do? // Feng Li wei {S1 nominates a student} // what can I do? 这是问题 *this is the question.*
02	Fe	er you go to groce shop buy some oranges.
03	S1	Yes. Sit down please. {S1 signs to Fe to sit down.}
04	Ss	er I er, what's I like best? Wu Yifan.
05	Wu	you er like best er orange.
06	S1	Yes, sit down please. Thank you. {S1 bows to show thanks. ss clapped hands in rhythm. S1 returns to his seat.}
07	T	Ok, good job. Now A--ny questions? ↑在这个过程中出现了什么问题？ *In the process, what problems did you see? If you have any ques* {A hand is put up.} Ok, please {T signs S2 to stand up.}
08	S2	我觉得他不应该说*I think he should not say* I like best oranges. 应该是*should be*，I like oranges best.
09	T	yes or no?
10	Ss	Yes.
11	T	I like oranges best, not I best like oranges. {T sees another hand up} [xxx] Please.
12	S2	I 哦，不是 *oh, no*，you, you oranges er
13	T	You like oranges--- {T prompts}
14	S3	best.
15	T	You like oranges best. Ok that's ok. Sit down please {T signs to S3}. Sit down {T signs to S2} Any more? ↑（…）please.
16	S4	刚才张云帆演讲的很好，但是他没有领着大家学单词。*Just now Zhang Annnfan did well in his speech, but he didn't teach the new words.*
17	T	oh 他没有带着大家学单词，那么哪个单词呢？ *he didn't teach the new words, what words, then?*
18	S4	他写在那里了，没有讲{pointing to the board}。*He wrote there, but didn't teach.*
19	T	哦，如果这几个单词读一下就好了 *oh, it would have been good if he had read these words aloud to us.* Ok follow me. Suddenly. […] {ss repeat pronunciation after T.}
20	T	ok good job 下次同学一定注意把这个生词先解说一下，否则其他同学 *Next time you must remember to explain the new words first, otherwise other students* may have difficulties. 中间呢，还有什么问题？ *any other problem?* want, want? ↑{T continues to tell students two other mistakes in the presentation.}

Observation Extract #3: T8.L1.O: Pre-lesson Presentation

		{A girl (S1) and a boy (S2) stand in the front, and the teacher is walking around the class., 4 English expressions are written on the left part of the blackboard with the Chinese translation - *be based on, common, storyline and continue*}.
01	S1	Hello, everyone. You can see some new words on the blackboard. First [xxx] will teach you some new words. Everyone read after him. Begin.
02	S2	Be based on 是"根据"的意思，是个动词；*means gen ju, it's a verb;* common "普通的"*pu tong de*，形容词 *it's an adjective*

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		[…] {S2 explains the meanings and parts of speech of the 4 expressions } Now follow me, please. Be based on, be based on
03	Ss	Be based on, be based on.
		[…]{The class read the 4 expressions after the S2.}
04	S1	Warmly welcome [xxx] to give us a speech. {The class clap hands with rhythm.}
05	S2	Today I want to talk about a TV programme […] {The boy finishes the speech, and the class clap hands.}
06	S1	Any questions? /// OK, xxx please.{S2 nominates S3}
07	S3	What's the name of the programme?
08	S2	The name is "famous people talk".
		{S1 acts as a teacher, nominates two other students to ask questions.}
09	S1	This word 'prefer' {pointing at the word on the board}, 更喜欢的意思 meaning like better. Can you understand?
10	Ss	Yes
11	S1	For example, Which do you prefer, a movie or [xxx]? Ok so much for today's presentation. Thank you.

Observation Extract #5: T2.L2.O: running-on instructions

01	T	16:46.7 - 17:37.1 Ok, now re-write. 重新整理你的思路 re-organise your thinking. organize your sentences. 重新组建你脑子里的句子 然后根据我给你的更多的提示 来写作文 re-organize your sentences, then write your composition according to the prompts I gave you. 时间 time is within 10 mins. within 的意思是 meaning is no more than. 十分钟之内 within 10 minutes
		//// 不要那么快就写啊 don't haste to write. Reorganize your mind./// 你脑子里已经有了很多句子 整理一下他们 把思路里的清晰一些///什么地方 哪一些? 这里有三个部分 但是三个部分是有关系的 把他们的关系以合适的方式关联在一起比如说 朋友和学校生活 它俩可以作为一个段落来讲随你但是写作文的人一定要让看作文的人非常清楚的看完这篇文章之后就很清楚的知道你写的什么 你要做什么 you've already got many sentences in your mind. Have a sort out /// what place? which ones? Here are three parts, but the three parts are connected. Find a way to get them connected, for example, your friends and your school life, they can be in a paragraph. It's up to you, but when you write, you must make your readers very clear. After reading your composition, they should be very clearabout what you've written, what you want to do.
	T	18:27.1 - 19:03.2 像讲个故事一样 *like telling a story* two years ago, I did what what.
	T	19:03.2 - 20:51.7 {ss write. T patrols. ... T comes to the front, works at the computer, checks the PPT. T patrols}. ... There's no word limit. 没有字数限制 你可以写很多 但是要在10够分钟之内完成 *There's no word limit, but you must finish within 10 minutes.*
	T	25:19.5 - 25:33.6 I know you have so much to say about yr life in XIUWEN, but time is limited, 时间有限啊 *time is limited.* one more min to finish your writing.不管写到哪里 想办法结束啊 Wherever you are now, try to stop.

Observation Extract #6: T8.L1.O: I am a story director

| 01 | T | Let's move on to the next part, 3b. 34:37 Read the question. Imagine the next episode. |
| 02 | Ss | What's episode? |

03	T	Ok, read the instruction again. I give you some advice. Let's take a look. 35:11. 你可以加自己的 *you can add your own* ideas. So, advice No. 1 昨天晚上有一个惊喜晚会; last *night, there was a surprise party;* No. 2. Lana说她会带一些小吃和饮料去 Marcia家; *Lana said she would take some snacks and drinks to Marcia's house;* No. 3. 她们去了Marcia 家附近的公园; *they went to the park nearby Marcia's house;* No. 4. 她们非常吃惊, 碰到了他们的同班同学,大家都拿出了礼物; *they were very surprised to see their classmates; they all brought their gifts;* No. 5. 他们说是Ben 告诉大家的, Marcia将举办一个惊喜晚会。 *They said Ben told everybody that Marcia would hold a surprise party.* Now you need to take out a piece of paper. 拿出自己的一张纸或本子来。 *Take out a piece of paper of your exercise book.* Try to use your imagination to finish the next episode 36:05 你发挥你的想象。 *Use your imagination.*
04	Ss	Starr，是小组一起写，还是自己写? *group write together, or everyone writes his/her own?*
05	T	你们可以 *you may* work together ，可以每个人写自己的 *may write your own*，也可以一块写 *also can write together.* 3640{Ss discuss in groups; T patrols; laughter is heard from a group.}
06	T	All right. 39:53. 咱们时间有限，你现在写到哪里，你把你的 results给我说一下，把你的结果啊。 *Our time is limited. Wherever you're now, you report your results, report your results.* Ok, please.
06	S1	
07	T	Ok, so, Lana said she would --- Repeat the sentence.
08	S1	
09	Ss	No, no
03	T	Let him finish.
04	S1	[xxx] snacks and drinks.
05	T	That's it?
06	S1	No. […]{S1 continues}
07	T	All right. Great. Thank you. 41:34 Ok, one more chance. Who? Who wants to share? [xxx] starts.
08	S2	[…] {student's voice hardly intelligible.}
09	T	Ok, slowly please. 其他同学好好听 *everyone, listen carefully.* {S continues, T prompts.}
04	T	This is your homework. You need to write it down in your workbook. Ok let's take a look at my work. Let's read together. {T points the sample story on the PPT}It was […] {T starts to read, and ss join him and chorus the story.} So you need to write your own article. 把自己的写到你的演草本上。 *Write your own on you exercise book.* So that's it. See you next time.

Observation Extract #7: T3.L1.O: discussing rules for Y/N questions

01	T	Have 是什么意思? 有没有实际意义? 这是什么句式?
	Ss	一般疑问句
		我希望大家接下来总结一下，大家怎么来变一般疑问句，咱们之前曾经讨论过一次 now discuss 07:03
02	S2	{Ss respond immediately, heads huddled together, discuss volume high. }
03	T	09:05 ok, stop here, who can share your results. 来分享一下你们讨论的结果 which group? 来，王心怡。
04	Wa	陈述句的句首加 do 或 does, I 变成 you。

05	T	Yes or no? 以前学过 Is he a boy? […] 来，看一下 {T shows rules on PPT}
06	T	He is my brother? 怎么变呢？
07	S3	Is he your brother?
08	T	You have a basket? 这个怎么变呢？
09	S1	You do have a basketball. Have 是个实义动词 Do 提前[…]
10	T	Ok one two
11	S1	You have a basketball. Do you have a basketball? Yes, I do. No, I don't. Yes. Very good.

Observation Extract #9: T3.L1.O: group presentations of plural nouns

0930

S1: 张组展示，er, er, 一般的是___ (Here is) Group Zhang's <a surname> present, er, er, the general ones are ___

T: 你展示的是什么内容？What is your present about?

S1: //类别构成—方法 categories, forming methods___

T: 什么的类别和方法？categories, forming methods of what?

S1: ////名词___ nouns___

T: 什么样的名词？What kind of nouns?

S1: er er er, 复数名词类别构成方法___ categories, forming methods of plural nouns

___

T: 不可数名词的复数吗？uncountable nouns' plural forms?

S1: 可数名词 plural nouns

T: Ok, go. 说清晰啊 make it clear.

S1: 一般的名词加 s，For general nouns, add s, book, books, bed, bed[s]，还有 and boy, boys 1009 ...…然后 1040，以辅音字母 //////

T: 你可以看后边这个单词

S1：er er er

T: 它的这个规律都是从特殊的单词总结出来的，你看 family 它是怎么变的吗？ok?

S1：/ er er er // 加 er, er er

T: Ok, don't be nervous. 不要紧张啊，这个不会没有关系，go on.

S1: 就这个？

T: Yes↑

S1: er family, families, oh, no

T: 这个知道了，你说，ok

S1: 以辅音字母加 y 结尾的，变 y 为 i，再加 es，family, families, party, parties.

T: OK.

S1:张组展示完毕。谢谢大家。

Ss: 还有（XXX）

S1: Oh,

T:（XXX）咱们就不展示了，时间关系，咱们只看规则的，ok，go，come to the front, everybody.

S2: Er, er, 赵组补充

T: Ok go

S2: ...还有不规则的，比如 man 和 men…

T: Ok yes, go on

S3: 陈组补充，字母加 y 结尾，这个尾写错了

T: Ok，yes {T and ss laugh}…陈组补充完毕。

S3 looked hesitant when going back

T: Don't be nervous. 不要紧张，没什么特别的，放松。Ok go on 继续。陈组补充有效 {T wrote +2 to 陈组} 1251

…

T: Ok, now 岳组，group Anne. Now 1523 他们已经说过两遍了，now this time, (XXX)<student name>, you'd better tell us without looking at the blackboard. Do you understand?

S4: Yes. <S4 was about to start.>

T: You'd better tell us without looking at the blackboard. Without, without looking at the blackboard {T using gestures to illustrate the idea not to look at the blackboard.}. You just look at us. Yes↑ Ok, go.

<S4 turned to the blackboard and was to start.>

T: Don't, don't look at the blackboard <T's voice raised sharply>. Look at us. Yes↑ Ok. Look at us.

S4: Er, er <S4, still looking at the blackboard, was starting to read.>

T: No. Without. {T using gestures to illustrate the idea not to look at the blackboard, and ss laughed.} 不要看黑板 Yes↑ Ok. Go.

S4: 岳组展示，一般情况下单数可数名词___ <S4 ignored T's instruction and started to read from the blackboard.>

T: No, don't look at the blackboard. Don't look at the blackboard. Just look at us.

S4: 单数可数名词变复数是加 s，还有那些特殊情况 … <S4 finally moved his eyes away from the blackboard and faced the class talking, but shortly got stuck and turned back again reading from the blackboard. Ss laughed and laughed.>

T: Now don't look at the blackboard.

S4: 然后复数不以 s 结尾的，是直接加's，名词以 s 结尾的加' 就行了 <Ignoring the T's insistence, S4 continued to read from the blackboard. >

T: 这所有格也加上了 ok, yes↑

S4: That's all. Thank you.

T: Ok, very good. {ss clapped hands}

…

<S5 made comments>

…

<S6 made comments>

T: ok, any more? Any more? Ok so much. (now go back to your seats) three two one. {ss moving back to their seats} Three, two, / one.

…<T summarised briefly.>

T: ok, so much, now today let's continue to learn unit 5. Now look at this photo. {T presenting PPT slide.}

<S7 raised hands.>

T: ok {T pointing to S7}

S7: 前面的不展示了吗？

T: 哦，这个不用展示了，时间关系，只只展示后面的

<S8 and S9, who had been standing at the side of the classroom waiting to present, went back to their seats.>

Observation Extract #11: T6.L1.O: group discussion

01	T	Discuss in your groups.
		{silence for 30seconds}
	T	OK, let's look at these questions together

Observation Extract #12: T4.L2.O: Student-led Peer Teaching (1)

| 01 | S1 | 大家好，今天呢，由我来带领大家复习一下第一单元，这个单元的话题呢是 *Hello everyone, today I'll lead you to have a revision of Unit 1. The topic of this unit is* Everyday Activities. […] 这个单元的重点句型是是现在进行时，现在进行时的构成是 be + 现在分词，哪位同学能起来给大家造一个句子 *The key sentence pattern of this unit is present continuous, the form of present continuous is be plus present participle. Can someone give an example?* {S2 waiting for response} er [xxx] {S2 nominates S3} |

02	S2	比如说 *for instance* I'm watching TV.
03	S1	这个句子哪个是"be" 动词呢? *Which is the "be" verb in this sentence?*
04	S2	am
05	S1	哪个是动词的现在分词形式呢？*Which one is the present participle form of the verb?*
06	S2	Watching TV
07	S1	Oh 很好 谢谢。*Very good. Thank you.*

Observation Extract #13: T4.L2.O: Student-led Peer Teaching (2)

01	S1	…再有就是, 请同学来翻译几个句子 我的全家福 *Next, I'd like get someone to translate a few sentences. Wo de quan jia fu* {Chinese for "my family photo"} [xxx], please.
02	S2	My family photo
03	S1	好，谢谢。*Good, thank you.* 我的一些照片 *wo de yi xie zhao pian* { Chinese for "some photos of mine"} {No response, silence for five seconds}
04	T	针对你们刚才讲的提问，讲的什么，你提问什么 *Focus on what you have just taught. Taught what, ask what.* {This phrase was then passed with no translation.}
05	S1	还有一个就是 *Next…*

Appendix 15: Collaborative Group Learning activities

Patterns		Activity content	T
Pattern 1 (123456) ⚘	Activity 1.	Talk about healthy life styles: good habits and bad habits (T1.L4)	T1
Pattern 2 (12456)	Activity 2.	To talk and write about the past (T2.L2)	T2
Pattern 3 (2356)	Activity 3.	Relay writing: If … I will… (T5.L2)	T5
Pattern 4 (123)	Activity 4.	Self-study: Read and circle the phrases (T1.L4)	T1
	Activity 5.	Pair work: How often (T2.L1)	T2
	Activity 6.	Autonomou learning, collaborative inquiry: (*zi zhu xue xi, he zuo tan jiu*) (T8.L1)	T8
Pattern 5 (235)	Activity 7.	Fill in the chart: Dining in restaurants (T1.L2)	T1,
	Activity 8.	Survey: Free time activities (T2.L1)	T2
	Activity 9.	Pair work: Do you have… (T3.L2)	T3
	Activity 10.	Group work, explain to each other (*Xiao zu he zuo, hu xiang jiang jie*): Direct and indirect speeches (T8.L1)	T8
	Activity 11.	Pair work: Talk about the picture (Dave & Paul) (T9.L1)	T9
Pattern 6 (23)	Activity 12.	Show time: Find the phrases (T1.L1)	T1
	Activity 13.	Summarise rules for comparatives / superlatives (T1.L3)	
	Activity 14.	Pair work: How high, how long … (T1.L3)	
	Activity 15.	Survey: How tall / heavy … (T1.L3)	
	Activity 16.	Discuss rules for Y/N questions (T3.L1)	T3
	Activity 17.	Make a dialogue and show (about Manatee) (T7.L1)	T7
	Activity 18.	Group work: I'm a story director (T8.L1)	T8
	Activity 19.	Pair work: Role read the dialogue (T9.L1)	T9
	Activity 20.	Pair work: Tom's room (T9.L2)	
	Activity 21.	Survey: In my group, I have … Mary has ... (T9.L2)	
Pattern 7 (345)	Activity 22.	Group presentation: Plural nouns 345 (T3.L1)	T3
Pattern 8 (3)	Activity 23.	Pair work: Role play the conversation (T3.L3)	T3
Pattern 9 (135)	Activity 24.	Review the adjectives (T1.L1)	T1
	Activity 25.	Retell the text following the pictures (T5.L1)	T5
	Activity 26.	Fast reading: Read and answer (T7.L2)	T7
	Activity 27.	Group work: Talk about timeline (T8.L2)	T8
	Activity 28.	Group check: 6 pictures using since / for (T8.L2)	
Pattern 10 (35)	Activity 29.	Self-directed learning: Find the phrases (T4.L1)	T4
	Activity 30.	Practise 3 sentence patterns: how often … (T4.L1)	
	Activity 31.	Advantages and disadvantages of being famous (T6.L1)	T6
	Activity 32.	Summarise the main idea of the text (T6.L1)	
Pattern 11 (2)	Activity 33.	Read and answer (T6.L1)	T6

[⚘ Note: The numbers in the brackets represent the aspects of the school model. 1=individual work; 2=discussion; 3= presentation; 4=feedback; 5=evaluation; 6= internalisation.]

Appendix 16: Collaborative Group Learning activities detail

Activity	Content
Activity 1.	四、 List their good and bad habits in the chart below. 		Good Habits	Bad Habits	 Du Fei: *Doesn't eat many snacks; *prefers his mother's home cooking / 1. Listen to very loud music. 2. Doesn't pay attention in class. I can do it better! (T1.L4)
Activity 2.	Unit 7 How was your weekend Learning outcomes 学习目标 To use the simple past tense to talk about the past. (T2.L2)
Activity 3.	*Freecell* *Maybe I will become a singer. If I become a singer, I will …* *Maybe I will become a singer. If I become a singer, I won't …* (T5.L2)
Activity 4.	一、self一study 自主学习 read&circle 1. get through　度过；通过；完成 2. with the help of　在…的帮助下 3. pay attention（to）　注意；留心 4. hang out　闲逛 5. would rather …than　比..更愿 6. eat healthily　健康饮食 7. do/try one's best　尽力而为；做到最好 8. organize my own life　安排我自己的生活 9. change one's attitude　改变态度 10. typical teenagers　典型的青少年 I can do it better! (T1.L4)

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Activity 5.	(T2.L1)	
Activity 6.	(T8.L1)	
Activity 7.	(T1.L2)	
Activity 8.	(T2.L1)	

Activity 9.	(T3.L2)
Activity 10.	(T8.L1)
Activity 11.	(T9.L1)
Activity 12.	(T1.L1)
Activity 13.	Summarise rules for comparatives / superlatives (T1.L3)

Activity 14.	(T1.L3)

How high is Qomolangma?

It's 8,844 meters high.

The height of Qomolangma is 8,844 meters.

The highest mountain in the world is 8,844 meters high.

Activity 15.	(T1.L3)

Make a survey

Name	Margret		
tall	161cm		
heavy	48kg		

Activity 16.	(T3.L1)

	单数	复数
第一人称	I (我们)	we (我们)
第二人称	you(你)	you（你们）
第三人称	he, she, it, Lily,the dog…（他/她/它…）	they （他们）

变一般疑问句时何时找助动词do 帮忙，何时找助动词does 帮忙你知道吗?

Activity 17.

Step8 2c PAIRWORK 根据 2b 表格中的内容组织对话进行表演。

Kind of animal	Manatee
Number	
Habitat	
Reason why they are endangered	
Description	

(T7.L1)

Activity 18.	**I am a story director.(3b)**
	Imagine the next episode of "Young Lives". Finish the newspaper article.
	1、以小组为单位，交流合作，大胆想象，设计情节。
	2、参考下面提示，完成设计。
	Advice:
	  1. 昨天晚上有一个惊喜晚会
	  2. Lana说她会带一些小吃和饮料去Marcia家
	  3. 她们去了Marcia家附近的公园
	  4. 她们非常吃惊,碰到了他们的同班同学,大家都拿出了礼物
	  5. 他们说是Ben告诉大家的,Marcia将举办一个惊喜晚会
	(T8.L1)

Activity 19.	**Dialogue**
	Sally: Good morning, Jane.
	Jane: Good morning, Sally.
	Sally: Oh, Jane, *this is* my sister Kate.
	    Kate, *this is* my friend Jane.
	Kate: Nice to meet you, Jane.
	Jane: Nice to meet you, too.
	    Are those your parents?
	Kate: Yes, they are.
	Jane: And *who's* he?
	Sally: He's my brother, Paul.
	Jane: Oh, I see. Well, *have a good day*!
	Sally/Kate: Thanks! You, too. Bye!
	(T9.L1)

Activity 20.	**Does he have a...? Yes, he does. No, he doesn't.** Does he have a computer? No, he doesn't. (T9.L2)
Activity 21.	***Groupwork:do a survey*** | Names	Things
Bob	basketball
Mary	tennis and ping-pong
…..	
….	

	|
	
	Report:
	  In our group, I **have** ….Bob **has** a basketball.
	Mary **has** …………
	  We have many sport things. We all like sport**s**.
	(T9.L2)

Activity 22.	Group presentation: Plural nouns 345 (T3.L1)

Activity 23.	**Pairwork** **Role-play the conversation.** （分角色表演对话） Woman: Can I help you? Mary: Yes, please. I need a sweater for school. Woman: OK. What color do you want? Mary: Blue. Woman: How about this one? Mary: It looks nice. How much is it? Woman: Nine dollars. Mary: I'll take it. How much are those yellow socks? Woman: Two dollars for one pair and three dollars for two pairs. Mary: Great! I'll take two pairs. Woman: Here you are. Mary: Thank you. Woman: You're welcome. (T3.L3)
Activity 24.	**Review----P30** crispy sweet salty sour 1. I don't like eating chocolate. It tastes too <u>sweet</u>. 2. Mom added salt but it still wasn't <u>salty</u> enough. 3. I prefer lemons to oranges. I like the <u>sour</u> taste. 4. She likes <u>crispy</u> cookies. They are hard, dry and easily broken.
Activity 25.	Number the pictures in order. the pictures (T5.L1)
Activity 26.	Fast reading: Read and answer (T7.L2)
Activity 27.	*Group work–Speaking* **Your life** was born started learning English study 7 years have been learning 1996 2005 2012 **I started learning English in...** How long have you been learning English? I have been learning English { for... { since... (T8.L2)

Activity 28.	**Using since /for:** What is / are …doing? How long has / have ...been…? 2 hours 5 years 2 years 45 minutes half an hour 1 hour (T8.L2)

Activity 29.	**Key Phrases**
	
	 1. watch TV 6. go skateboarding
	 2. do some reading/ 7. surf the internet
	    read (English) books 8. Animal World
	 3. go shopping 9. every day
	      10. once/twice /three
	 4. go to the movies times a week
	 5. on weekends 11. once/twice a month
	
	 (T4.L1)

Activity 30.	T4.L1: Practice 3 sentence patterns **Work in pairs** A: Hello!... B: hi!.... A: What do you usually do….? B: I usually….. A: How often do you…..? B: I ….. A: What your favorite …? B: My favorite….is …./It's….. (T4.L1)
Activity 31.	T6.L1: talk about advantages and disadvantages of being famous
Activity 32.	T6.L1: summarise the main idea of the text(T6.L1)
Activity 33.	T6.L1: read and answer **Section A 3a** Questions for the story: 1、If you become a professional athlete, what will happen? 2、How about becoming famous? 3、What do many athletes do? 4、Do professional athletes have problems? 5、If you play sports for a living, what will happen to you? 6、If you become rich, what will happen? 7、What do famous people complain about? (T6.L1)

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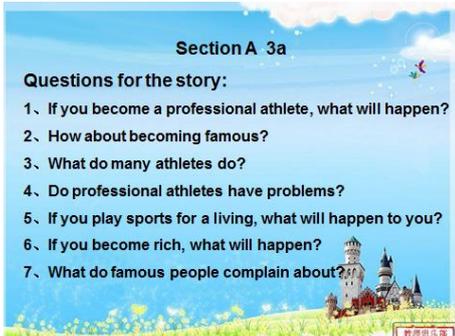
Appendix 17: Sample of student lesson plan

UNIt3 what does he look like?

一.(1)重点词汇: short, curly, straight hair. medium build height.
thin heavy brown blonde glasses. look like.

(2)重难点句型: ① I don't think he's so great.
    我认为他不很伟大.
类似句: 我认为他不是一个老师 I don't think he is a teacher
② stop doing sth 停止做某事 (当前做的事情)
例句: class begins. Please stop talking.
stop to do sth 停下来去做另一件事.
例句: class is over. Let's stop to have a rest.
③ short curly brown hair (长短+形状+颜色)
④ He/she { is tall / short (体格) 或 has a medium build
          { has beard / curly hair (长发·长短)
⑤ 用 what do / does + sb + look like? 用来询问某人的
外貌特征.意思是……长的什么样子.
⑥ He doesn't wear glasses.
⑦ I'm tall / short / medium height / fat / heavy / thin.
⑧ tell jokes. ⑨ go shopping.

⑩ remember 的用法.
remember to do sth (记得去做某事)
remember doing sth (记得己经做过某事)

⑪ He has a beard ⑫ wear a red dress and white shoes.

二.误区.
The twins are of medium height.
——. —— the twins look like?

错误答案: how to.
错误分析: 对句子理解错误. 用错了疑问词
正确答案: what do.

三.写作技巧 ①height (short, tall)
          ②build (thin, heavy)
          ③hair (curly brown hair, long straight black hair)
          ④other (某些特征) 如兴趣爱好.

Unit 4

课题: How often do you exercise?
目标: 复习频度副词, 熟悉单词短语等
重点.短语: always usually often sometimes hardly ever never
短语归纳:
1. How often 2. on weekends 3. go to the movies
4. go skate boarding 5. watch TV 6. go shopping
7. hardly ever 8. every day 9. surf the internet
10. once / twice / three times a week
11. read english books 12. favorite program 13. animal world
14. as for 15. junk food 16. drink milk / coffee
17. want sb. to do sth. 18. be good / bad for ....
19. eat vegetables / fruit 20. eating habits
21. eating habits 22. plenty healthy / good
23. a lot of / lost of 24. try (not) to do sth
25. have a healthy lifestyle 26. look after.
27. the same as .... 28. help sb. (to) do sth
29. be different from
30. keep in good health = keep healthy

重点. 句子:
1. what do you usually do on weekends?
   I usually play soccer.
2. What do they usually do on weekends?
   They often go to the movies.
3. How often do you exercise?
4. How many hours do you sleep every night?
5. what's your favorite program?
6. Eating junk food is bad for your health.

always, usually, often, sometimes, hardly ever 和 never 是英语中
最常用的频度副词, 它们在句子中的位置较为固定。通常放在它们所修饰的
词之前, 若所修饰 be, 助动词或情态动词时, 要把它们所放的位置要互相调换。
频度各不相同。
① always 的频度为 100%, 表示动作重复, 状态持续, 中间没有
与间断, 意为"总是, 一直"
② usually 的频度为 70%左右, 意为"通常"即很少有例外。
③ often 的频度为 50% 左右, 意为"常常"但不如 usually 频繁
④ sometimes 的频度为 20%, 意为"有时", 表示偶尔发生
⑤ hardly ever 的频度为 5% 左右, 意为"几乎不, 很少"。
⑥ never 的频度为 0%, 意为"从来不, 永不"

课堂操练: 你的生活方式与她的相同还是不同?
Is your lifestyle —— —— —— hers or —— ?
她每晚睡几个小时
He sleeps —— —— every night
吃蔬菜对你健康有益
Eating vegetable —— —— —— your health
大多数学生 一周锻炼 三次或四次
—— —— exercise —— —— —— —— ——